Sabha Parva

The word sabha means assembly hall or council and in the eighteen-parva classification of the Mahabharata, Sabha Parva comes second. Understandably, this parva is about an assembly hall. Sabha Parva has seventy-two chapters. In the 100-parva classification of the Mahabharata, Sections 20 through 28 constitute Sabha Parva. There are two ways to number chapters in this translation. The first way is to do it consecutively within each of the eighteen parvas. That is, the numbering of the chapters begins afresh with Sabha Parva. This is the way the chapters are numbered in the Sanskrit text. The alternative is to number chapters consecutively right from the beginning. The former makes it easier to match the translation with the Sanskrit text, but the latter is probably more reader-friendly. The numbering of the chapters, from Sabha Parva onwards, uses both, so that the reader has choice. The first number is a consecutive one, from the beginning, and the second number (within brackets) is the numbering within Sabha Parva.

Section Twenty

Sabha Parva

This parva has 429 shlokas and eleven chapters.

Chapter 226(1): 19 shlokas
Chapter 227(2): 23 shlokas
Chapter 228(3): 34 shlokas
Chapter 229(4): 34 shlokas
Chapter 230(5): 116 shlokas
Chapter 231(6): 18 shlokas
Chapter 232(7): 26 shlokas
Chapter 233(8): 38 shlokas
Chapter 234(9): 25 shlokas
Chapter 235(10): 23 shlokas
Chapter 236(11): 73 shlokas

The name of the first section within this parva is also the same as the name of the parva. The word sabha having already been explained.

226 (1)

Vaishampayana said, 'In Vasudeva's presence, Maya joined his hands as a sign of respect and repeatedly worshipping him, spoke to Partha in flattering words, "O Kounteya! You have saved me from the angry Krishna and the fire that desired to consume me. Please tell me what I can do for you." Arjuna replied, "O great asura! You have done everything and can leave in peace. May you always be friendly towards us and may we always be friendly towards you." Maya said, "O illustrious one! O bull among men! What you have said is deserving of you. O descendant of the Bharata

lineage! But as a token of my affection, I wish to do something for you. I am extremely wise, the Vishvakarma of the danavas. O Pandava! Therefore, I wish to do something for you." Arjuna replied, "You think that I have saved your life from instant death. But if that is the case, I cannot ask you to do anything. O Danava! But I do not wish to stand in the way of your resolution either. Therefore, do something for Krishna and that will be tantamount to doing something for me." O bull among the Bharata lineage! Thus urged by Maya, Vasudeva thought for an instant about what might be done for him. Having thought, Krishna said, "O Daitya! Build a wonderful assembly hall for Dharmaraja that you think to be worthy of him, so that no one from the world of men can construct an assembly hall that is its equal, even as they gaze at it amazed. O Maya! Build an assembly hall in which we will see the designs[1] of the gods, asuras and humans." Having heard these words, Maya was delighted. He drew up a design for an assembly hall for the Pandavas that was like a vimana.

'Then Krishna and Partha told Dharmaraja Yudhishthira everything that had happened and introduced Maya to him. Yudhishthira offered him the homage that he deserved. Maya accepted and paid his respects in return. O lord of the universe! O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Then the daitya told Pandu's sons about the deeds of the gods in ancient times, in diverse places. After resting for a while, Vishvakarma[2] reflected and began to build an assembly hall for the great-souled Pandavas. According to the wishes of the great-souled Krishna and Pritha's sons, the immensely energetic one performed the initial rites on an auspicious occasion. The valorous one honoured thousands of the best brahmanas, fed them *payasa*[3] and donated a lot of riches to them. He then measured out a divine and beautiful plot that was ten thousand *kishku*[4] in every direction and was marked by all the good characteristics.'

Vaishampayana said, ‘Janardana lived happily in Khandavaprastha, beloved by the sons of Pritha and honoured by them. Wishing to see his father, he then made up his mind to leave. The one with the large eyes paid his homage to Dharmaraja and Pritha.[5] The one who is worshipped by the world worshipped his father’s sister by touching her feet with his head. She inhaled the fragrance of Keshava’s head and embraced him. Then the immensely famous Hrishikesha[6] Krishna went to see his sister and spoke to the soft-spoken and gentle Subhadra with tears in his voice. The illustrious one’s words were brief, appropriate and loaded with goodness. She too worshipped him with her head bowed down and gave him messages for her relatives. Taking his leave from the beautiful one, Varshneya then went to see Krishna[7] and Dhoumya. The supreme among men worshipped Dhoumya in the appropriate way and consoling Droupadi, Janardana took her leave. The learned and strong one then went to the other brothers with Partha. Surrounded by the five brothers, Krishna looked like Shakra surrounded by the immortals. The bull among the Yadus then worshipped the gods and the brahmanas with garlands, chanting, obeisance and many kinds of fragrances.

‘Having performed all these acts, the best of those who are supreme gave the brahmanas vessels full of curds, fruit, *akshata*[8] and riches and circumambulated them. They uttered their blessings and he set out, ascending his swift and golden chariot that had Tarkshya[9] on its banner. Carrying his club, chakra, Sharnga[10] and other weapons the lotus-eyed one left at an auspicious and excellent *muhurta*,[11] tithi[12] and nakshatra, pulled by his horses Sainya and Sugriva.[13] King Yudhishthira, lord of the Kurus, ascended after him and out of love for him, made the charioteer Daruka, supreme among charioteers, stand aside and himself grasped the reins. Arjuna also mounted and waved a golden-handled and white *chamara*[14] all around his head. The powerful Bhimasena and the twins followed Krishna, surrounded by the priests and the citizens. Keshava, the destroyer of enemy warriors was thus followed by the brothers and shone

like a preceptor followed by his beloved disciples. Bidding the lamenting Partha farewell, Govinda embraced him. He then paid his homage to Yudhishthira, Bhimasena and the twins. The twins embraced him firmly in their arms and paid him homage. After making an agreement[15] with the Pandavas and persuading them and their followers to turn back, Madhusudana Krishna then left for his own city, in glory like Purandara. Out of affection, their eyes lovingly followed Krishna for as long as they could see, because their minds were still unsatisfied at the sight of Keshava. The handsome Shouri[16] swiftly disappeared from their sight. Their desires unsatisfied, since their hearts had left with Govinda, Pritha's sons turned back and those bulls among men returned to their city. Riding his chariot, Krishna reached Dvaraka in time.'

228(3)

Vaishampayana said, 'Maya then spoke to Partha Arjuna, supreme among victorious ones. "With your permission, I will now go away. But I will be back soon. To the north of Kailasha and near Mount Mainaka, where all the danavas perform sacrifices near the beautiful lake Bindu, I have collected jewels and treasure.[17] Vrishaparva[18] is always faithful to his promises and I have kept it in his sabha. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! If it is still there, I will go and bring it. I will then build a sabha for the Pandavas that will be famous, beautiful, pleasing to the heart and adorned with all the gems. O descendant of the Kuru lineage! There is a supreme club in lake Bindu, kept there by King Youvanashva[19] after he slew his enemies in battle. It is heavy and firm and is embellished with golden knobs, equal to one hundred thousand clubs and is capable of killing everything. That will be for Bhima what the Gandiva is for you. There is also Varuna's great conch shell, with an excellent sound, and named Devadatta. There is no doubt that I shall give you all these." Having told Partha this, the asura left towards the north-east.

'To the north of Kailasa, near Mount Mainaka, there is an illustrious peak named Hiranyashringa, filled with great gems. There is the beautiful

lake Bindu, where King Bhagiratha lived for a long time, in his desire to see the Ganga, since known as Bhagirathi.[20] O supreme among those of the Bharata lineage! The great-souled one, lord of all beings, performed one hundred great sacrifices. There were many golden sacrificial stakes at the spot, encrusted with gems. This was for the sake of beauty and not to set an example.[21] It was there that the thousand-eyed one, Shachi's husband, attained success. It was there that the eternal lord of all beings, whose energy is piercing, was worshipped by thousands of beings after creating all the worlds. It is there that Nara, Narayana, Brahma, Yama and Sthanu, as the fifth, perform sacrifices after the end of one thousand yugas. It is there that Vasudeva always faithfully performed sacrifices for one thousand years, for the sake of those who are good. It was there that Keshava placed thousands and tens of thousands of splendid sacrificial stakes and altars, garlanded in gold.

'O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Arriving there, he took the club and the conch shell and the crystal objects that were with Vrishaparva and were required for the sabha. He brought all this with the assistance of the servant rakshasas. Bringing all this back, the asura built a matchless sabha. It was beautiful, divine, encrusted with jewels and famous in the three worlds. He gave the supreme club to Bhimasena and the supreme conch shell Devadatta to Partha. O great king! The supreme assembly hall had golden pillars and a circumference of ten thousand kishku. Its beautiful form was radiant and divine, like the fire, the sun or the moon. Its splendour seemed to challenge the blazing splendour of the sun. Its radiance was divine, as if it was on fire with divine energy. It was like the sky covered with a mountain or a cloud—spacious, large, smooth, without blemish; a remover of fatigue. It had the best objects in it and its walls were garlanded with gems. It had many jewels, many treasures and had been built well by Vishvakarma.[22] The unrivalled beauty Maya gave it was such that Sudharma of the Dasharhas or Brahma's palace was no match. On Maya's instruction, eight thousand rakshasas, known as *kimkara*s,[23] guarded and protected the sabha. They could travel in the sky,

were terrible and had large forms and great strength. Their eyes were red and yellow, their ears were like conch shells and they were armed.

'Inside the sabha, Maya built a matchless tank full of lotuses. Their leaves were made of *vaidurya*,[24] and their stalks were made out of brilliant gems. There was the fragrance of lotuses and there were many fish[25] in the water. There were flowering lotuses and it was adorned with fish and turtles. Gentle steps led down into clear and pure water that was always present and was stirred by the wind. It was decorated as with dots of pearls.[26] On seeing the tank decorated with gems and precious stones, some kings did not recognize and fell into it, out of ignorance.[27] Around the sabha, there were giant trees that were always flowering. They were beautiful and dark, and cast cool shade. All the gardens were fragrant. All the ponds were adorned with swans, *karandava*s[28] and *chakravaka*s.[29] The wind carried the fragrance of the flowers in the water and those on land everywhere and pleased the Pandavas. Such was the sabha that Maya built in fourteen months. When it was completed, he informed King Dharmaraja.'

229(4)

Vaishampayana said, 'King Yudhishthira then entered. The lord of men fed ten thousand brahmanas with ghee, payasa, roots and fruits and gave them unused garments and many garlands. The lord gave each of them one thousand cows. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! The cries of "what an auspicious day" seemed to touch heaven. The supreme among the Kurus worshipped the gods with music, diverse songs and many fragrances. Then, for seven nights, the great-souled Yudhishthira was served by wrestlers, dancers, fighters, raconteurs and minstrels. When the homage had thus been paid, the Pandava and his brothers pleasured in that beautiful sabha, like Shakra does in heaven.

'Rishis and kings from many countries were seated with the Pandavas in that sabha—Asita, Devala, Satya, Sarpamali, Mahashira, Arvavasu,

Sumitra, Maitreya, Shunaka, Bali, Baka, Dalbhya, Sthulashira, Krishna Dvaipayana and we ourselves, Vyasa's disciples—Shuka, Sumantu, Jaimini and Paila. Then there were Tittira, Yajnavalkya, Lomaharshana and his son Apsuhomya, Dhoumya, Animandavya, Koushika, Damoshnisha, Traivani, Parnada, Ghatajanuka, Mounjayana, Vayubhaksha, Parasharya, the two Sarikas, Balavaka, Shinivaka, Sutyapala, Kritasharma, Jatukarna, Shikhavana, Subala, Parijataka, the immensely fortunate Parvata, the sage Markandeya, Pavitrapani, Savarni, Bhaluki, Galava, Janghabandhu, Raibhya, Kopavegashrava, Bhrigu, Haribabhru, Koundinya, Babhrumali, Sanatana, Kakshivana, Oushija, Nachiketa, Goutama, Painga, Varaha, Shunaka, the immensely ascetic Shandilya, Karkara, Venujangha, Kalapa and Katha. These sages were immersed in dharma, were self-controlled and had their senses under restraint. There were many others who were learned in the Vedas and the Vedangas. All these supreme rishis waited upon the great-souled one in the sabha. They were learned in dharma and immaculate and discoursed about pure tales. In that same way, the best of kshatriyas also waited on Dharmaraja—the fortunate, great-souled, righteous and prosperous Munjaketu, Samgramajit, Durmukha, the valorous Ugrasena, the lord of the earth Kakshasena, the undefeated Kshemaka, Kamala the king of Kamboja, the mighty Kampana who alone made the Yavanas[30] tremble the way the Kalakeya asuras were made to tremble by the wielder of the vajra,[31] King Jatasura beloved by the Madras, kings Kunti and Kuninda of the Kiratas, Anga, Vanga and Pundra, Pandya, Udraja, Andhraka, King Sumana of the Kiratas, the king of the Yavanas, Chanura, Devavrata, Bhoja, Bhimaratha, Shrutayudha of Kalinga, Jayatsena of Magadha, Susharma, Chekitana, Suratha the destroyer of enemies, Ketumana, Vasudana, Kritakshana of Videha, Sudharma, Aniruddha, the immensely strong Shrutayudha, the invincible Anuparaja, the great alms-giver Kshemajit, Shishupala and his son, the king of Karusha, the invincible Vrishni princes who were like the gods, namely, Ahuka, Viprithu, Gada, Sarana, Akrura, Kritavarma, Shini's son Satyaki, Bhishmaka, Ahriti, the valorous Dyumatsena, the great archers from

Kekaya, Yajnasena of the Somakas. O king! There were all the immensely powerful princes of the Vrishnis who had learnt the science of archery from Arjuna and were dressed in deer and antelope hides[32] and other princes who had been similarly taught—Rukmini son,[33] and Samba and Yuyudhana Satyaki.[34] O ruler of the earth! These and many other kings were there. Dhananjaya's eternal friend Tumbaru was there, Chitrasena with his advisers and many other gandharvas and apsaras, skilled in singing and music, knowledgeable in the beating of *tala*[35] and kinnaras, who were excellent pupils of *laya*.[36] At Tumbaru's command, those learned ones sang in celestial tones, as was laid down in the rules, and pleasured and paid homage to Pandu's sons and the rishis who were assembled in the sabha, rigid in their vows and devoted to the truth. They paid homage to Yudhishthira the way the gods do so to Brahma in heaven.'

230 (5)

Vaishampayana said, 'O descendant of the Bharata lineage! When the great-souled Pandavas were seated there and the great-souled gandharvas were also seated in the sabha, the immensely energetic rishi Narada was on a tour of the worlds and came there, accompanied by other rishis. O lord of kings! The devarshi's radiance was infinite and he could travel as he willed. He wished to please himself by seeing the Pandavas' sabha and arrived with Parijata, the wise Parvata, Sumukha and Soumya. On seeing rishi Narada, the chief of the Pandavas,[37] who knew everything about dharma, instantly arose, with his younger brothers. With humility, he worshipped him happily and offered him a seat in accordance with the prescribed rites. The righteous one offered him homage with jewels and everything that he desired. Having been thus worshipped by all the Pandavas, the great rishi who was learned in the Vedas asked Yudhishthira questions mixed with dharma, artha and kama.

'Narada asked, "Is your wealth spent properly? Does your mind find pleasure in dharma? Do you find happiness without making your mind

suffer? O god of men! Do you follow the undecaying actions followed by your grandfathers before you, to bring dharma and artha to men? Do you hurt dharma by artha or artha by dharma or both for the sake of pleasures that kama brings? O supreme among victorious ones! O benefactor who knows the value of time! Do you always divide your time equally to the service of artha, dharma and kama? O unblemished one! Do you use the six royal qualities[38] to judge the seven means?[39] Do you test your strengths and weaknesses in the fourteen ways?[40] O supreme among victorious ones! After examining yourself and your enemies, do you follow the eight duties[41] before concluding an alliance? O bull among the Bharata lineage! Are your six chief officers[42] always devoted to you and not corrupted and lazy because of the riches they have earned? Are your deliberations based on reason and service of messengers and not divulged by you, your advisers or ministers? Do you pursue peace and war at the appropriate times? Do you follow the right course for those who are neutral and in the middle? O brave one! Are your ministers like you—wise, pure, capable of living, of good lineage and loyal to you? O descendant of the Bharata lineage! The root of royal victories is in counsel, kept secret by advisers who are skilled in advice and learned in the sacred texts. You have surely not become a slave to sleep and you are awake at the appropriate time. In the dead of the night, do you think about what should be done and what should not? Surely you do not seek advice from only one, or from too many. Surely the counsel obtained from your ministers does not spread throughout the kingdom. When you have decided on action that has great utility but is easily accomplished, do you implement them quickly without placing obstructions in the way? Do you examine the outcome of your action, known and unknown? Once begun, do they have to be restarted or are they confused at the start? O king! O hero! Do people know of action accomplished or partly accomplished, but not those intended and not accomplished? Have you appointed wise teachers, knowledgeable in all the shastras, to instruct all the princes and chief warriors? Do you purchase a single learned man for one thousand foolish

ones? In times of distress, it is the learned one who brings the greatest good. Are all your forts stocked with riches, food, weapons, water, instruments, artisans and archers? Even a single adviser who is intelligent, brave, self-controlled and clever can bring great prosperity to a king or a king's son. Do you use groups of three spies, who do not know one another, to find out about the eighteen ministers on the other side and the fifteen on your own territory?[43] O destroyer of enemies! Unknown to them, do you always keep watch over your adversaries, with care and on guard?

'"Is your priest humble, born of a good lineage, famous, untouched by jealousy and do you pay him homage? Is he in charge of the sacrificial fires and is he intelligent and upright, knowledgeable in the rituals? Does he always know the time when sacrifices and offerings must be rendered? Is the appointed astrologer skilled in the knowledge of rituals and in treating all the omens and destinies? Have you appointed superior servants in superior positions and medium ones in medium positions? Have you employed inferior servants in inferior positions? For the best tasks, have you appointed the best advisers, those who are without deceit and pure, up to their fathers and grandfathers? O bull among the Bharata lineage! Surely your subjects are not oppressed by harsh punishments when the ministers govern your kingdom. Do they slight you the way sacrificial priests slight those who have fallen[44] or wives slight oppressive husbands addicted to desire? Is your general bold, brave, intelligent, persevering, pure, well born, loyal and skilled? Are the chief warriors of your army skilled in every kind of warfare and are they known to exhibit great valour and prowess? Do you treat them respectfully? Are your soldiers given their rations and wages on time? Do you know that non-payment of rations and wages on time makes servants angry with their masters? The learned have described this as a great calamity. Are the sons of good families chiefly loyal to you? In the field of battle, are they ever ready to give up their lives for you? In military affairs, is there a single one who is beyond control and causes harm to many because of selfish reasons? If a man

performs an extraordinary act beyond what he is required to do, does he obtain greater honour, rations and wages? Do you reward, with wealth and honour, men who are learned, humble and skilled in any type of knowledge in accordance with their qualities? O bull among the Bharata lineage! Do you support the wives of men who have given up their lives for you and those who have otherwise come to grief for your sake? O Partha! Do you offer protection, like to a son, to an enemy who has been defeated in battle, or surrenders, having become fearful and weak? O lord of the earth! Are you impartial towards everyone on earth and can they fearlessly come to you, like a father or a mother? O bull among the Bharata lineage! When you get to know that an enemy is in distress, do you inspect the three parts of your force[45] and swiftly advance on him, knowing that the rear of the army is the root of defeat? O great king! Do you pay wages to your soldiers in advance? O scorcher of enemies! Do you distribute riches from the enemy kingdom among the chiefs of your army, in accordance with what they deserve? O Partha! After having first controlled your own self and senses, do you seek to defeat enemies who are enslaved by their own passions and senses? Before marching against your enemies, do you first employ the four techniques of sama, dana, danda and bheda,[46] in accordance with their qualities? O lord of the earth! Do you first strengthen your base before marching out? Do you attack to win and having won, do you protect? Does your army have four types of forces[47] and is it divided into eight wings,[48] well trained by superior officers and capable of defeating the enemy? O scorcher of enemies! O great king! When attacking the enemy in battle, surely you do not kill during seasons of sowing and harvesting. Do the various agents in your kingdom and in those of the enemies carry on their appointed tasks and protect each other?

‘“O great king! Are the servants who protect your food, garments and perfumes approved by you? Are your treasury, granary, stable, gates, armoury and revenue department guarded well by loyal servants whose virtue has been proved? O lord of the earth! Surely you first protect

yourself against your servants, private and public, then protect them from your kinsmen and against each other. Do they know in the forenoon of your pleasures in drinking, gambling and sporting with women?[49] Are expenses covered with half the revenue, or a third or a quarter? Do you always sustain with food and riches your relatives, superiors, the aged, merchants, artisans, dependents, the helpless and the distressed? Do accountants and writers employed to look after revenue and expenditure always report to you in the forenoon about both? Surely you do not dismiss without reason servants who have your welfare at heart, are loyal, are capable and who have not committed errors before. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Once you have determined the good, the indifferent and the bad, do you appoint them to the right posts? O lord of the earth! Do you appoint those who are avaricious, prone to thievery, quarrelsome and are under age? Do you oppress the kingdom with the strength of avaricious thieves, minors and women? Are the farmers content? Are the tanks in the kingdom large and full and placed at right distances, so that the harvest is not destroyed because of lack of rainfall? If food and seeds are scarce, do you grant farmers charitable loans at the rate of one *pratika* for one hundred?[50] O son! Are the professions[51] undertaken by those who are honest? O son! The happiness of the world depends on these professions. O king! Are the five[52] who are entrusted with the five duties brave and wise? Are they to be trusted and do they bring welfare to the countryside by working together? To protect the city, is the village guarded like a city and is the hamlet guarded like a village? Are all the remote parts under your supervision? Are thieves who steal and loot in your cities pursued over uneven and even terrain by your soldiers and forced to flee? Do you comfort and protect the women? But surely you do not trust them, nor reveal any secrets before them.

‘“After hearing from your spies and reflecting on what needs to be done and knowing those who happen to be inside,[53] do you sleep comfortably and in security? O lord of the earth! O Pandava! Having slept during the first and second divisions[54] of the night, do you awake in the last[55] and

think about dharma and artha? After waking at the right time and knowing the mysteries of time, do you always reveal yourself to men, properly adorned and accompanied by your ministers? O destroyer of enemies! Do guards dressed in red garments, armed with swords and adorned with ornaments, attend to you so as to protect you? O lord of the earth! In punishing those who deserve it and honouring those who deserve it, do you act like Yama, impartial between those you like and those you do not like? O Partha! Do you cure bodily ailments through medicines and restraint and mental ailments by serving the aged? The physicians appointed to look after your body must always be devoted to you and have your welfare at heart and are surely skilled in the eight divisions.[56] O lord of the world! Out of greed, delusion or pride, surely you do not dismiss plaintiffs and defendants who come to you. From greed or delusion, do you withhold a livelihood from men who seek your protection out of love and trust? Do citizens and residents of your kingdom, bought by your enemies, unite and rise up against you? O Yudhishthira! Is your weak enemy restrained with force and is your strong enemy restrained with good counsel or force or both? Are the chief rulers of the land devoted to you? If instructed by you, are they ready to give up their lives for you?

'"For the sake of your own welfare, do you pay homage to brahmanas and righteous ones, in accordance with their learning and qualities? Do you follow dharma with its three[57] sources, as practised by those who have come before you? Do you practise the rituals followed by them? Are brahmanas with good qualities offered tasty food in your house and paid dakshina?[58] With steadfastness of mind and complete self-control, do you perform *vajapeya*, *pundarika*[59] and other sacrifices? Do you bow in homage before relatives, superiors, gods, ascetics, places of worship, trees that bring welfare to men and brahmanas? O unblemished one! Is your intelligence and conduct like this, so that it bestows long life and fame and helps the cause of dharma, kama and artha? The kingdom of one who conducts himself in this way is never destroyed. Such a king subjugates the earth and attains great happiness. O bull among men! Surely no pure-

souled and respected man is falsely charged with theft and put to death by avaricious ones who have no knowledge of the sacred texts and are not skilled. Surely he who is a thief and has been apprehended with stolen goods and tools in front of witnesses is not set free out of covetousness.[60] O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Corrupted by bribes, do your advisers see falsely when disputes arise between the poor and the rich? Do you abhor the fourteen royal vices—atheism, falsehood, anger, negligence, procrastination, avoidance of the wise, laziness, restlessness of mind, consultation with only one person, consultation with those who are ignorant of artha, failure to act on something that has been decided, divulgement of counsel, abandonment of beneficial plans and addiction to material objects? Is your study of the Vedas successful? Are your riches successful? Is your marriage successful? Is your learning successful?"

'Yudhishthira asked, "How does the study of the Vedas become successful? How do riches become successful? How does marriage become successful? How does learning become successful?"

'Narada replied, "The Vedas become successful in agnihotra.[61] Riches become successful in consumption and donations. Marriage becomes successful when sons are born through union. Learning becomes successful in good conduct."'

Vaishampayana said, 'Having said this, the immensely ascetic sage Narada then again questioned the righteous Yudhishthira.

'Narada asked, "O king! Do those who are paid from taxes on trade only take agreed taxes from merchants who come from far away in search of gain? When they bring their wares, are they treated well in your city and kingdom and not cheated with deception? O son! You always know about the ways of dharma and artha. Do you listen to words of dharma and artha from the aged, who always know what brings artha? Are honey and ghee given to brahmanas to increase crops, cattle, flowers, fruit, dharma and artha? Do you always give all the artisans materials, implements and wages for a period up to four months? O great king! Do you examine the work and praise the creator? Do you honour good ones among good

people? O bull among the Bharatas! O lord! Do you follow all the sutras, especially those about elephants, horses and chariots? O bull among the Bharatas! Are sutras on the science of arms, instruments and architecture of cities regularly studied in your house? O unblemished one! Are you familiar with all the weapons, *brahma danda*[62] and all poisons that destroy enemies? Do you protect your kingdom against fear from fire, snakes, predators, disease and rakshasas? Knowing the ways of dharma, do you nurture like a father the blind, the dumb, the crippled, the deformed, the orphaned and mendicant ascetics?"'

Vaishampayana said, 'Having heard these words from the best of the brahmanas, the great-souled bull among the Kurus happily bowed down and worshipped his feet. The king spoke to the divine Narada. Yudhishthira said, "I will do what you have instructed, because my wisdom has increased even more." Having said this, the king did as he had been instructed and obtained the earth, up to the boundaries of the ocean. Narada said, "A king who is always engaged in the protection of the four varnas[63] passes his time happily here and attains Shakra's world."'

231(6)

Vaishampayana said, 'When the supreme maharshi finished speaking, Dharmaraja Yudhishthira worshipped him and was given permission to speak. Yudhishthira said, "O illustrious lord! What you have stated as just and dharma is certainly right. I duly observe what is just to the best of my powers. There is no doubt that acts performed by kings in ancient times, and the way in which they were performed, were successful in attaining just and proper objectives. O lord! I wish to walk along that righteous path. But we are not able to walk it the way those self-controlled ones did." Having uttered these words and worshipped him, Yudhishthira, with his soul devoted to dharma, paused for some time. Then seeing that Narada, the sage who travelled the worlds, was comfortably seated and he was seated below him, the immensely wise Pandava asked him in the assembly of kings. Yudhishthira asked, "You always travel the many and

varied worlds Brahma created in ancient times, at the speed of thought and like a witness. O brahmana! I am asking you. Tell me if you have ever seen anywhere a sabha like this, or one superior to it." Hearing these words of Dharmaraja, Narada smiled and replied in soft words. Narada said, "O son! O king! O descendant of the Bharata lineage! I have never seen nor heard of an assembly hall like the bejewelled one that belongs to you in the world of men. I shall describe to you the sabhas of the king of the ancestors,[64] the wise Varuna, Indra and the one who dwells in Kailasa.[65] O bull among the Bharatas! If your mind wishes to hear, I will also describe Brahma's divine sabha, the dispeller of all fatigue." Having been thus addressed by Narada, Dharmaraja Yudhishthira and his brothers, in that assembly of kings, joined their hands in salutation. The great-souled Dharmaraja then replied to Narada, "Describe to us all those assembly halls. We wish to hear from you. O brahmana! What are those sabhas made of? How long are they and how wide? Who waits upon the grandfather[66] in his sabha? Who on Vasava, king of the gods, and who on Vaivasvata Yama?[67] Who wait on Varuna and Kubera in their sabhas? O devarshi! Tell us. We wish to hear all this exactly. We have been filled with great curiosity." Having been thus addressed by Pandava, Narada replied, "O king! Then hear about those divine sabhas, one by one."'

232(7)

'Narada said, "O Kourvaya![68] Shakra's divine sabha is radiant and he obtained it as a result of his acts. Shakra built it himself and it possesses the radiance of the sun. It is one hundred *yojana*s[69] wide and one hundred and fifty yojanas long. It is five yojanas high. It is airborne and can roam anywhere at will. It dispels old age, misery and fatigue. It is free from fear, and pure and auspicious. It is full of rooms and seats and is beautiful, adorned with celestial trees. O Partha! O descedant of the Bharata lineage! There is a supreme seat in that sabha and the lord of the gods sits there with Mahendrani Shachi, who is Shri and Lakshmi.[70] His form cannot be

described. He wears a crown and red[71] bracelets on his upper arms. He is dressed in spotless garments and adorned with brightly coloured garlands. Hri, Kirti and Dyuti are with him.[72] O king! There the great-souled Shatakratu is always worshipped by all the Maruts, all the householders, the siddhas, the *sadhya*s and the masses of gods. They and their followers are all divine in form and adorned with ornaments. They worshipped the great-souled king of the gods, the vanquisher of enemies.

‘“O Partha! All the devarshis worship Shakra. They are unblemished, cleansed of sin, radiant, like the fire in form, without blemish and without fatigue. They are performers of the soma sacrifice—Parashara, Parvata, Savarni, Galava, Shankha, Likhita, the sage Gourashira, Durvasa, Dirghatapa, Yajnavalkya, Bhaluki, Uddalaka, Shvetaketu, the lord Shatyayana, Havishmat, Gavishtha, King Harishchandra, Hridya, Udarashandilya, Parasharya, Krishihvala, Vataskandha, Vishakha, Vidhata, Kala, Anantadanta, Tvashta, Vishvakarma and Tumburu. They were born from wombs and not born from wombs. They lived on air and on fire. All of them worshipped the lord of the worlds, the wielder of the vajra—Sahadeva, Sunitha, the immensely ascetic Valmiki, Shamika, Satyavak, the truthful Prachetas, Medhatithi, Vamadeva, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, Marutta, Marichi, the immensely ascetic Sthanu, Atri, Kakshivat, Goutama, Tarkshya, the sage Vaishvanara, the sage Kalakavrikshiya, Ashravya, Hiranyada, Samvartta, Devahavya and the powerful Vishvaksena. O Pandava! O descendant of the Bharata lineage! All the divine waters and herbs, Shraddha,[73] Medha,[74] Sarasvati,[75] artha, dharma, kama, lightning, clouds bearing rain, the winds, thunder, the eastern direction, the twenty-seven fires that convey sacrificial offerings, Agni, Soma, Indragni, Mitra, Savita, Aryama, Bhaga, the Vishvadevas, the Sadhyas, Shukra, Manthi, the sacrifices, the dakshinas, the planets, all the *stobha*s[76] and all the mantras uttered at sacrifices are seated there. O king! There are also the apsaras and the beautiful gandharvas. With dancing, music and songs, and various other forms of entertainment, they amuse Shatakratu, the king of the gods. O king of men! With hymns and

rituals, they praise the valorous acts of the great-souled destroyer of Bala and Vritra. All the brahmana rajarshis and all the devarshis are there, riding various divine chariots that blaze like the fire. They are garlanded and adorned and all of them come and go. Brihaspati and Shukra go there together. O king! These and many other ascetics who are rigid in their vows, riding chariots that are like the moon and themselves, as handsome as the moon Bhrigu and the seven great sages[77] go there on Brahma's instructions. O king! I have myself seen this sabha of Shatakratu's, named Pushkaramalini. O great king! O unblemished one! Now hear about Yama's.'''

233(8)

'Narada said, "O Yudhishthira! Listen. I will now describe Vaivasvata Yama's divine sabha, built by Vishvakarma. O king! O Pandava! That radiant assembly hall is one hundred yojanas long and wide and possesses the resplendence of the sun. It can roam everywhere at will. It pleases the heart and is neither too cold, nor too hot. Grief, old age, hunger, thirst, unpleasantness, misery, fatigue and obstructions are not found there. Every desire, human and divine, is satisfied there. O vanquisher of foes! There is an abundant supply of tasty food and drink. The garlands there have pure fragrances. The trees always bear flowers and fruit. There is tasty water, both hot and cold.

'"O son! Pure rajarshis and unblemished brahmarshis[78] happily attend upon Yama Vaivasvata there—Yayati, Nahusha, Puru, Mandhata, Somaka, Nriga, Trasadasyu, Turaya, Kritavirya, Shrutashrava, Aripranuda, Susimha, Kritavega, Kriti, Nimi, Pratardana, Shibi, Matysa, Prithavaksha, Brihadratha, Aida, Marutta, Kushika, Samkashya, Samkriti, Bhava, Chaturashva, Sadashvormi, the king Kartavirya, Bharata, Suratha, Sunitha, Nala from Nishadha,[79] Divodasa, Sumana, Ambarisha, Bhagiratha, Vyashva, Sadashva, Vadhryashva, Panchahasta, Prithushrava, Rushadgu, Vrishasena, the immensely powerful Kshupa, Rushadashva, Vasumana, Purukutsa, Dhvaji, Rathi, Arshtishena, Dilipa, the great-souled Ushinara,

Oushinara, Pundarika, Sharyati, Sharabha, Shuchi, Anga, Arishta, Vena, Duhshanta, Sanjaya, Jaya, Bhangasvari, Sunitha, Nishadha,[80] Tvishiratha, Karandhama, Bahlika,[81] Sudyumna, the powerful Madhu, Kapotaroma, Trinaka, Sahadeva, Arjuna, Dasharathi Rama,[82] Lakshmana, Pratardana, Alarka, Kakshasena, Gaya, Gourashva, Jamadagni Rama,[83] Nabhaga, Sagara, Bhuridyumna, Mahashva, Prithvashva, Janaka, the king Vainya, Varishena, Puraja, Janamejaya, Brahmadatta, Trigarta, King Uparichara, Indradyumna, Bhimajanu, Gaya, Prishtha, the unblemished Naya, Padma, Muchukunda, Bhuridyumna, Prasenajit, Arishtanemi, Pradyumna, Prithagashva, Ajaka, the one hundred kings from Matsya,[84] the hundred Nipas,[85] the hundred Hayas,[86] the one hundred Dhritarashtras,[87] the eighty Janamejayas,[88] the one hundred Brahmadattas,[89] the one hundred fighting Iris,[90] the rajarshi Shantanu, your father Pandu, Ushadgava, Shataratha, Devaraja, Jayadratha, the rajarshi Vrishadarbhi, Dhaman and his ministers and, in addition, thousands of Shashabindus[91] who departed after performing many great horse sacrifices, with copious donations. O rajarshi! These pure rajarshis, of great fame and renown, waited upon Vaivasvata Yama in his sabha. There were Agastya, Matanga, Kala,[92] Mrityu,[93] performers of sacrifices, Siddhas, those whose bodies are based on yoga, those with fire in their mouths,[94] the ancestors—those who live on froth, those who live on vapours, those who receive oblations, those who seat themselves on kusa grass and those others who have bodies.[95] Free from disease and in embodied form, the wheel of time, the illustrious conveyor of sacrificial offerings,[96] men who performed evil deeds, those who died during the winter solstice, those of Yama's officers appointed to reckon time, *shimshapa*[97] and *palasha*[98] trees, *kasha*,[99] *kusha*[100] and other trees and plants worshipped Dharmaraja.[101] These and many others are the courtiers of the king of the ancestors. O Partha![102] I am incapable of enumerating their names and deeds. But this beautiful sabha is never

crowded and is capable of going anywhere at will. Vishvakarma built it after spending a long time in austerities. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! It blazes with the luminosity of its own radiance. Ascetics who are fearsome in their austerities, rigid in their vows, truthful, calm, practised in renunciation, accomplished, purified through their holy deeds, all with radiant bodies and all attired in spotless attire, adorned with bracelets on their upper arms and garlands, with flaming earrings, performers of good and holy deeds and marked with signs, go there. Great-souled gandharvas and one hundred classes of apsaras are there, filling it everywhere with instrumental music, dancing, singing, laughter and sport. O Partha! Sacred fragrances and sounds and celestial garlands adorn it everywhere. Ten million righteous and intelligent men, in bodily form, always wait upon the great-souled lord of all beings. O king! Such is the sabha of the great-souled king of the ancestors. I will now describe to you Varuna's sabha, known as Pushkaramalini."'

234(9)

'Narada said, "O Yudhishthira! Varuna's celestial sabha is white in radiance. Its dimensions are exactly like those of Yama's, with white walls and portals. Vishvakarma built it under the water and it is surrounded with divine bejewelled trees, yielding flowers and fruit. It is carpeted with blue, yellow, black, dark, white and red flowers and there are bowers with clusters of blossoms. Hundreds and thousands of beautiful and sweet-toned birds of many varieties are there, with forms impossible to describe. That sabha is pleasant to the touch, not too cold, nor too hot. It is beautiful and white, ruled by Varuna, with many rooms and seats. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Varuna sits there with Varuni,[103] adorned with celestial gems, ornaments and attire. Adorned and ornamented, bedecked with celestial garlands, the Adityas wait upon Varuna, the lord of the water, there. So do Vasuki, Takshaka, the serpent named Airavata, Krishna,[104] Lohita, Padma, the valorous Chitra, the nagas Kambala and Ashvatara, Dhritarashtra, Balahaka, Manimana, Kundaladhara, Karkotaka,

Dhananjaya,[105] Prahrada, Mushikada and Janamejaya[106]—all spreading their hoods, marked with pennants and auspicious circular signs. O Yudhisthira! Without ever getting tired, these and many other serpents wait upon the great-souled Varuna—King Vairochana Bali,[107] Naraka the conqueror of the earth,[108] Prahrada, Viprachitti, the danavas known as Kalakhanjas, Suhanu, Durmukha, Shankha, Sumana, Sumati, Ghatodara, Mahaparshva, Krathana, Pithara, Vishvarupa, Surupa, Virupa, Mahashirsa, Dashagriva,[109] Vali,[110] Meghavasa, Dashavara, Kaitabha,[111] Vitatuta, Samhrada, Indratapana. These classes of daityas and danavas are all adorned with beautiful earrings, garlanded and crowned and attired in divine garments. They have been blessed with boons, are brave, and have all transcended mortality. They are all correct in observing their vows and worship the great-souled god Varuna, who holds them in dharma's noose.[112]

'"O Yudhishthira. There are the four oceans,[113] the river Bhagirathi, Kalindi,[114] Vidisha,[115] Venna,[116] Narmada, Vegavahini, Vipasha,[117] Shatadru,[118] Chandrabhaga,[119] Sarasvati,[120] Iravati, Vitasta,[121] Sindhu,[122] Devanada,[123] Godavari, Krishnavenna,[124] Kaveri the best of rivers—these and other rivers, fords and lakes, wells and springs, ponds and tanks, in embodied form. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! The directions, the earth, all the mountains and all the aquatic creatures worship the great-souled one. All the masses of gandharvas and apsaras, skilled in singing and playing musical instruments, are seated and they praise Varuna. Mountains full of jewels and the juices of herbs are all there in embodied form, worshipping the lord. O bull among the Bharata lineage! Such is Varuna's beautiful sabha, which I have myself seen in my earlier travels. Hear now about Kubera's sabha."'

‘Narada said, “O king! Vaishravana’s[125] radiant and white sabha is one hundred yojanas long and seventy yojanas wide. O king! Vaishravana built it himself through the power of his austerities. It has the luminosity of the moon, is established in the sky and is like a peak of the mountain Kailasa. Held aloft by the *guhyaka*s,[126] celestial and adorned with tall and golden trees, it seems to be fixed to the firmament. It radiates rays and is resplendent, fragrant with divine scents. Beautiful and resembling white clouds and mountain peaks, it seems to float in the sky. There sits the handsome King Vaishravana, adorned in lustrous earrings and attired in colourful ornaments and garments. He is surrounded by one thousand women. He is seated on a supreme and pure throne that is as radiant as the sun and is covered with divine spreads, with celestial footstools. Pure and fragrant breezes carry the perfume from extensive coral trees, scented groves, water lilies from the lotus pond known as Alaka[127] and Nandana[128] gardens, please the mind and heart and offer homage.[129] O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Gods and gandharvas, surrounded by crowds of apsaras, sing divine songs in celestial tones there.”

‘“There are Mishrakeshi, Rambha, the sweet-smiling Chitrasena, Charunetra, Ghritachi, Menaka, Punjikasthala, Vishvachi, Sahajanya, Pramlocha, Urvashi, Ira, Varga, Sourabheyi, Samichi, Budbuda and Lata. O Pandava! These and a thousand other masses of apsaras, skilled in singing and dancing, pay homage to the granter of riches. With these masses of gandharvas and apsaras, that sabha is never empty and is magnificent, filled with divine music, singing and dancing. There are the gandharvas known as kinnaras and others known as *nara*s—anibhadra, Dhanada, Shvetabhadra, Guhyaka, Kasheraka, Gandhakandu, the immensely strong Pradyota, Kustumbura, Pishacha, Gajakarna, Vishalaka, Varahakarna, Sandroshtha, Phalabhaksha, Phalodaka, Angachuda, Shikhavarta, Hemanetra, Vibhishana, Pushpanana, Pingalaka, Shonitoda, Pravalaka, Vrikshavasya, Aniketa, Chitravasa. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! These, and many other yakshas,[130] in hundreds and thousands,

are in attendance. The fortunate Shri and Nalakubara[131] are always there. I and others like me go there often. Many preceptors and devarshis are often present there. O tiger among men! And also the three-eyed[132] illustrious god, Pashupati Umapati,[133] the wielder of the trident, the destroyer of Bhaganetra,[134] with the unblemished goddess,[135] and surrounded by hundreds and thousands of his followers[136]—dwarfs, horrible, hunchbacked, bloody-eyed, swift as thought, feeding on flesh, fat and marrow, fearful to see and hear, wielding many terrible weapons and like powerful wind storms. O king! He[137] is always seated with his friend,[138] the granter of riches. O king! Such is his sabha. I saw it while I was travelling through the sky. O king! I will now tell you about the grandfather's[139] sabha, where all fatigue is dispelled."'

236(11)

'Narada said, "O king! In ancient times, in the era of the gods, the illustrious and indefatigable lord Aditya[140] descended from heaven to see the world of men. O Pandava![141] He had earlier seen the sabha of the self-creating Brahma and in human form, described it to me, exactly as he had seen it. O bull among the Bharata lineage! O descendant of Pandu! When I heard about this celestial, immeasurable, indescribable and disembodied sabha, which delights all living beings with its lustre and on learning about its qualities, I wished to see the sabha myself. O king! I then spoke to Aditya. 'O illustrious one! I wish to see the grandfather's sabha. O lord of cattle![142] Through what austerities and what deeds can one see it? O illustrious one! Please tell me what herbs and what powers of maya will allow me to set my eyes on that sabha.' O lord of men! Then the illustrious and valorous Surya[143] took me to Brahma's unblemished sabha, one that knows no fatigue. It is not possible to describe its form exactly. From one moment to another, it takes on an indescribable form. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! I do not know its dimensions or its shape. I have never

seen such beauty earlier. O king! That sabha always contributes to pleasure. It is neither too hot, nor too cold. As soon as one enters, hunger, thirst and all types of fatigue disappear. It has many different forms. It is beautifully coloured and resplendent. It is not supported by pillars. It does not decay and is eternal. Its self-radiance surpasses that of the moon, the sun and the flaming crest of the fire. On the rafters of the firmament, its radiance lights up the sun itself.

'"O king! O descendant of the Bharata lineage! There sits the illustrious supreme god, the grandfather of all the worlds. Through the powers of his maya, the lord himself, and alone, constantly creates all the beings—Daksha, Pracheta, Pulastya, Pulaha, Marichi, Kashyapa, Bhrigu, Atri, Vasishtha, Goutama, Angiras, the mind, the sky, knowledge, wind, energy, water, earth, sound, touch, form, taste and smell, the root cause behind creation and evolution of the world, the moon with the constellations, the sun with its rays, wind, seasons, resolution and breath. Others too numerous to mention wait upon the self-creating one—artha, dharma, kama, bliss, hatred, austerities, self-control. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! O Pandava! O lord of the earth! The gandharvas and the apsaras go there together, and all the twenty-seven lords of the world,[144] Shukra,[145] Brihaspati,[146] Budha,[147] Angaraka,[148] Shani,[149] Rahu,[150] all the planets, mantra, *rathantara*,[151] Harimat,[152] Vasumat,[153] the Adityas with their lord,[154] all the gods known by diverse double names,[155] the Maruts, Vishvakarma, the Vasus, the classes of ancestors, all the sacrificial offerings, Rig Veda, Sama Veda, Yajur Veda, Atharva Veda, all the sacred texts, histories,[156] the minor Vedas, all the Vedangas, cups for soma, sacrifices, all the gods, the distress-removing *Savitri*,[157] seven kinds of speech,[158] understanding, perseverance, learning, wisdom, intelligence, fame, forgiveness, sama hymns, songs of praise, different types of chants and commentaries with their arguments, in embodied form. O lord of the earth! O descendant of the Bharata lineage! There are *kshana*,[159] *lava*,[160] muhurta,[161] day, night, fortnights, months, the six

seasons, years, the five yugas,[162] the four types of day and night,[163] the divine wheel of time that is eternal and indestructible, Aditi, Diti, Danu, Surasa, Vinata, Ira, Kalaka, Devi, Surabhi, Sarama, Goutami, Adityas, Vasus, Rudras, Maruts, Ashvins, Vishvadevas, Sadhyas, ancestors who are as swift as thought, rakshasas, pishachas, danavas, guhyakas,[164] birds, serpents and animals. They worship the grandfather—the god Narayana himself, devarshis, the Valakhilya rishis, those born from wombs and those born from without wombs. O lord of men! Know that I have seen whatever exists in the three worlds, mobile and immobile, there. O Pandava! The eighty thousand rishis who have controlled their seed and the fifty thousand rishis who have offspring, I have seen these and the other dwellers of heaven go there, as they will. All of them worship him by lowering their heads and return as they had come. O king of men! The illustrious and immensely intelligent Brahma, the grandfather of the worlds, the self-creator who is infinitely radiant and merciful towards all beings, the soul of the universe, receives their homage and treats them as they deserve, with calm words, honour, riches and objects of pleasure—gods, demons, serpents, sages, yakshas, birds, *kaleya*s,[165] gandharvas and apsaras. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! O son! That pleasure-giving sabha is always agitated with the comings and goings. It is filled with every form of energy, divine, served by masses of brahmarshis, radiant with Brahma's riches, extremely beautiful and the dispeller of fatigue. O tiger among kings! Just as your sabha is unmatched among men, that sabha is likewise in all the worlds that I have seen. O Pandava! These are the sabhas that I have seen earlier among the gods. Your sabha is supreme to all in the world of men."

'Yudhishthira said, "O lord! O supremely eloquent one! From what you have described, it is as if the entire world of kings is in Vaivasvata's sabha. O illustrious one! You have said that all the serpents, the lords of the daityas, the rivers and the oceans are in Varuna's sabha. And that the yakshas, guhyakas, rakshasas, gandharvas, apsaras and Shiva[166] are in that of the lord of riches.[167] You have said that the maharshis,[168] all the

classes of gods and all the sacred texts are in the grandfather's sabha. O sage! You have specifically listed that in Shatakratu's sabha are the gods, the gandharvas and various maharshis. O great sage! You have said that only one rajarshi, Harishchandra, is in the sabha of the great-souled king of the gods. What were his deeds, traits, austerities and rigidity of vows that this famous one alone rivals Shakra? O brahmana! When you went to the world of the ancestors, did you see the immensely fortunate Pandu, my father? O illustrious lord! What did he say? I wish to learn. I wish to hear all this, because my curiosity is great."

'Narada replied, "O lord of kings! O lord! Since you have asked me about the greatness of the wise Harishchandra, I will narrate it to you. He was a powerful king and sovereign over all the kings on earth. All the kings on earth were under his rule. O lord of men! Riding alone on his invincible chariot that was embellished with gold, he conquered the seven *dvipa*s[169] with the power of his weapons. O great king! Having conquered the entire earth, with its mountains, forests and groves, he performed a great royal sacrifice. At his command, all the kings brought riches to that sacrifice and waited upon the brahmanas. That lord of men happily distributed to the priests, then and there, five times what they had asked for. When the rituals were completed, he gratified the brahmanas, who had assembled there from various directions, with many types of riches. The brahmanas, gratified with many types of food and delicacies, honoured with what they desired and satisfied with piles of gems, were satiated and said that he was more energetic and more famous than all the kings. O Partha! O king! O bull among the Bharata lineage! Know that it is for this reason that Harishchandra shines more brightly than thousands of other kings. O lord of men! Having completed his great sacrifice, the immensely powerful Harishchandra was instated in his kingdom and looked radiant. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Whichever king performs the great *rajasuya* sacrifice,[170] blissfully spends his time with Indra after the consecration is over. O bull among the Bharata lineage! Those who do not flee on the field of battle and are killed, they too attain his abode and

spend their time in bliss. Those who give up their bodies after performing terrible austerities, they too go to that place and shine eternally.

‘“O Kounteya! Your father Pandu, descendant of the Kuru lineage, was amazed on witnessing King Harishchandra’s fortune. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! ‘You can conquer the earth. Your brothers follow you. Perform the great rajasuya sacrifice.’[171] O Pandava! O tiger among men! Act upon that wish. With your ancestors, you will then attain the great Indra’s world. O king! It is said that this great sacrifice is constrained by many obstacles. *Brahma rakshasa*s,[172] destroyers of sacrifices, look for holes. A war may follow it, leading to the destruction of the earth.[173] For a small reason, a terrible destruction may ensue. O lord of kings! Reflect on this and do what is good for you. Always be watchful in protecting the four varnas. Grow prosperous. Rejoice. Gratify the brahmanas with gifts. Thus have I described in detail all that you asked me to. With your permission, I shall now leave for the city of the Dasharhas.”’[174]

Vaishampayana said, ‘O Janamejaya! O king! After having said this to Partha, Narada went away with all the rishis with whom he had come. O Kourava! O descendant of the Bharata lineage! When Narada had left, Partha and his brothers began to think about performing the supreme royal sacrifice.’

Section Twenty-One

Mantra Parva

This parva has 222 shlokas and six chapters.

Chapter 237(12): 40 shlokas
Chapter 238(13): 68 shlokas
Chapter 239(14): 20 shlokas
Chapter 240(15): 16 shlokas
Chapter 241(16): 51 shlokas
Chapter 242(17): 27 shlokas

The word mantra has different meanings, but here it means a process of consultation. This section is therefore about a process of consultation prior to the royal sacrifice.

237(12)

Vaishampayana said, ‘O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Having heard the words of the rishi, Yudhishthira sighed and thinking about performing rajasuya, could find no peace. He had heard about the glory of the great-souled rajarshis and had learnt that they had attained the pure worlds through their deeds and sacrifices. In particular, he thought about rajarshi Harishchandra, who had performed the sacrifice, and thought about performing rajasuya. Having honoured all those who were present in his sabha, and having been honoured by them in return, he consulted them about the sacrifice. The lord of kings and bull among the Kuru lineage, after reflecting a great deal, made up his mind to perform rajasuya. King Yudhishthira, protector of dharma, supreme among those who know all dharma, attentive to his subjects and always acting for the welfare of

everyone without distinction, extraordinary in his energy and power, reflected on what would bring welfare to all the worlds. Having thus conducted himself and having thus reassured everyone like a father, no one could be seen who hated him and he came to be known as Ajatashatru.[1]

'That supreme among eloquent ones assembled his advisers and brothers and repeatedly asked them about rajasuya. Having been thus asked by the immensely wise Yudhishthira, who was eager to perform the sacrifice, the advisers then uttered words that were deep with meaning. "A consecrated king who wishes to achieve the characteristics of an emperor and attain the traits of Varuna, performs this rite, even though he is a king. O descendant of the Kuru lineage! You are worthy of the status of an emperor and all your well-wishers think that the time has come for you to perform rajasuya. The time for the sacrifice, in which priests rigid in their vows establish six fires[2] to the chants of sama, is free and depends on kshatriya riches.[3] At the completion of the sacrifice, after offering all the oblations, the performer is consecrated as a universal emperor. O mighty-armed one! All of us serve you and you are capable. O great king! Do not reflect any more and set your mind on the rajasuya." Separately and together, thus did his well-wishers speak. O lord of the earth! Having heard these words, full of dharma, bold, pleasant and supreme, Pandava accepted them in his mind. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Having heard the words of his well-wishers and knowing himself to be capable, he repeatedly reflected in his mind about rajasuya. The wise one again consulted his brothers, great-souled priests and advisers like Dhoumya and Dvaipayana.

'Yudhishthira asked, "How can this great rajasuya, worthy of an emperor and one I wish to perform, be accomplished?" O lotus-eyed one! Having been thus asked by the king, they then spoke these words to Yudhishthira, the one with dharma in his soul. "O king! You are learned in the ways of dharma. You are worthy of performing the great sacrifice of rajasuya." When the priests and sages uttered these words, his advisers and

brothers applauded them. The immensely wise and self-controlled Partha, always desirous of the welfare of the worlds, thought again. A wise one who considers his powers, capacity, time, place, income and expenditure and acts with complete deliberation, never perishes. He thought that a sacrifice begun only with his one desire might bring ruin. Carefully bearing the weight on his shoulders, his thoughts went out to Krishna Janardana, as the right person to decide the course of action. Hari, supreme in all the worlds, is immeasurable, mighty-armed and without birth, born among men only because of his own wishes. His feats rival those of the gods and there is nothing that is not the consequence of his deeds. There is nothing that he cannot bear. Thus it was that Pandava thought of Krishna. Having arrived at this final conclusion, Partha Yudhishthira, swiftly sent a messenger to one who was like his preceptor and the preceptor of all beings.

'Riding a swift chariot, the messenger soon reached the Yadavas and the Dvaraka-residing Krishna in Dvaravati. Hearing that Partha was eager to see him, Achyuta[4] was also eager to see him and went to Indraprastha with Indrasena.[5] Travelling through many countries on the swift mounts, Janardana reached Partha in Indraprastha. Dharmaraja showed him homage in his house, like to a brother. So did Bhima. With a gladdened heart, he[6] then went to see his father's sister.[7] After that he sported himself with his beloved well-wisher, Arjuna, and like a preceptor, was worshipped by the twins. After he had rested himself in that pleasant place for some time and was refreshed, Dharmaraja came to him and told him about his plans. Yudhishthira said, "O Krishna! I wish to perform rajasuya. But it cannot be performed merely through my wishing it. You are omniscient. You are the one in whom everything is possible and you are the one who is worshipped everywhere. The king who is the lord of everything can perform rajasuya. O Krishna! My well-wishers have said that I should perform it. But my final decision will certainly be in consonance with what you say. Out of friendship, some do not notice faults. Out of desire for riches, some say that which is pleasant to hear.

Some consider that to be the best course of action which brings them self-gain. It is often seen that people's advice is like this. You alone are above all motives, beyond desire and anger. You should tell me that which is supreme, for the welfare of the worlds."'

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'Krishna said, "O great king! Because of all your qualities, you are capable of performing rajasuya. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Though you know everything, I shall tell you something. Those who are known as kshatriyas in this world are remnants from kshatriyas who were exterminated by Jamadagni Rama.[8] O lord of the earth! O bull among the Bharata lineage! You know about the rules and the authority of words those kshatriyas established to decide lineage. All the kings and all the hierarchies of kshatriyas on this earth claim descent from Aila[9] and Ikshvaku.[10] O king! O bull among the Bharata lineage! Know that the kings from Aila's lineage and those from Ikshvaku's lineage constitute one hundred and one dynasties. O great king! The descendants of Yayati and Bhoja are also great in number and qualities and extend in the four directions. They and their prosperity are worshipped everywhere by the kshatriyas.

'"However, after having enjoyed the middle kingdom,[11] a king named Chaturyu,[12] one of the one hundred and one dynasties, wished to create dissension among them. Jarasandha has inherited the empire by birth and that king's influence extends everywhere. O king! O great king! The powerful Shishupala has gone to him like a disciple and has become his general. Vakra, the immensely strong king of Karusha, who fights with the powers of maya, and many other immensely valorous and great-souled ones, are also under his protection. The illustrious Hamsa and Dibhaka are also with the immensely valorous Jarasandha. And there are Dantavakra, Karusha,[13] Kalabha and Meghavahana. O great king! O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Bhagadatta was your father's old friend. On his forehead

he wears a divine gem that is known as the supreme gem on earth. He is the one who punished the two *yavana*[14] kings Mura and Naraka and now, with unlimited powers like Varuna, is the king of the west.[15] Though he has lowered his head[16] through his speech and especially his deeds, his heart actually holds affection for you, like a father does. Your brave maternal uncle, Purujit, the extender of the Kuru lineage and the scorcher of his enemies, rules in the south-west extremities of the earth and is the only king who is affectionately loyal to you. Likewise, the evil king of the Chedis,[17] whom I did not kill earlier, has also gone over to Jarasandha. He is known in the world as the supreme being and out of delusion, always bears my signs.[18] There is also a king powerful in Vanga,[19] Pundra and Kirata,[20] known as Vasudeva of Pundra. O great king! There is also the powerful Bhishmaka Chaturyu[21] of Bhoja, a friend of Indra's and a slayer of enemies. Through his learning and strength, he has conquered Pandya[22] and Krathakaishika. The valorous Ahriti is his brother and is like Jamadagni Rama in battle. They also serve the king of Magadha.[23] We are his relatives[24] and always do what is agreeable to him. But though we honour him, he doesn't honour us and always does what is disagreeable to us. O king! Without bearing in mind his lineage and his strength, he has only seen Jarasandha's blazing fame and has placed himself under him. O lord! Out of fear for Jarasandha, the eighteen branches of the northern Bhojas have fled to the west and so have the Shurasenas, the Bhadrakaras, the Bodhas, the Shalvas, the Patachcharas, the Sustharas, the Sukuttas, the Kunindas and the Kuntis. The kings of the Shalveyas, together with their brothers and attendants, the southern Panchalas and the eastern Koshalas from the Kunti region have also fled. Out of oppressive fear for Jarasandha, the Matsyas and the Samnyastapadas have left the north in terror and fled to the south. All the Panchalas have abandoned their own kingdoms and fled in all directions.

‘“Some time earlier, Kamsa,[25] mindless in folly, oppressed his relatives and married the two daughters of Brihadratha’s son,[26] making them his queens. They are named Asti and Prapti and are Sahadeva’s younger sisters. Strengthened by this alliance, that foolish one oppressed his relatives and became superior to all of them, though this brought him great ignominy. The evil-hearted one then oppressed the elders among the Bhoja kings and in a desire to save their relatives, they concluded an alliance with us. I served my relatives by marrying off Ahuka’s daughter, Sutanu, to Akrura.[27] Then, with Samkarshana[28] acting as my second, I killed Kamsa and Sunama, with Rama’s[29] assistance. O king! Though that immediate danger was averted, Jarasandha rose up in arms against us. The eighteen branches of the Yadavas consulted among themselves. Even if one killed with mighty weapons that can kill a hundred at a time,[30] one would not be able to kill him in three hundred years, because he had two supreme warriors named Hamsa and Dibhaka.[31] They were the strongest of the strong, with power like that of the immortals. When the valorous Jarasandha was united with these two brave warriors, there was no one in the three worlds who could vanquish them. Such was my view. O supremely wise among wise ones! This was not only my view. It was the view of all the kings who exist. O king! The great king famous as Hamsa was engaged in battle for eighteen days. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! A rumour spread that Hamsa had been killed. On hearing that Hamsa had been killed, Dibhaka decided that he could not continue to live in this world without Hamsa. He drowned himself in the Yamuna and, in this way, met his death. When Hamsa, the vanquisher of enemy cities, heard the news about Dibhaka, he too immersed himself in the Yamuna and drowned. O bull among the Bharata lineage! When King Jarasandha heard about their deaths in the water, he left Shurasena[32] and returned to his own city.

‘“When that enemy-killing king retreated, we were delighted and began to live happily in Mathura again. But the lotus-eyed wife of Kamsa,

Jarasandha's daughter, went to her father, the king of Magadha. O lord of kings! O destroyer of enemies! She repeatedly urged him to kill her husband's killer. O great king! We remembered the advice we had given ourselves at the earlier council. O lord of men! Distracted at heart, we fled. O king! We divided our great riches into small portions and out of fear for him, fled separately, with our riches, kin and relatives. After thinking about this, we sought refuge in the western directions. O king! There is a beautiful city known as Kushasthali,[33] adorned by Mount Raivata.[34] We began to live there. We repaired its fortifications so that it became impregnable even to the gods. It was not just the bulls among the Vrishnis, even the women were capable of fighting from there. O killer of enemies! Without any fear, we now live there. O tiger among the Kuru lineage! When we look at the entry to that mountain, known as Madhavitirtha, we Madhavas have found supreme happiness.[35]

'"With our strength, we were capable of withstanding Jarasandha's oppression. But we have resolved to seek refuge with you. Our habitation is three yojanas deep and extends for three yojanas. At intervals of one yojana, there are one hundred gates and the portals are guarded by brave and valorous kshatriyas from the eighteen branches.[36] There are eighteen thousand warriors in our lineage. Ahuka has one hundred sons and each of them has three hundred more. Charudeshna and his brother,[37] Chakradeva, Satyaki, I myself, Rohini's son,[38] Samba who matches Shouri[39] in battle —these are the seven atirathas.[40] O king! Now listen to the others— Kritavarma, Anadhrishti, Samika, Samitinjaya, Kahva, Shanku and Nidanta, these seven are maharathas. The old king Andhakabhoja and his two sons make ten.[41] They are brave, capable of destroying the worlds, valorous and endowed with immense strength. They have now remembered the middle country[42] and live there, among the Vrishnis. O supreme among the Bharata lineage! O descendant of the Bharata lineage! You alone possess the qualities of becoming a universal emperor. You are capable of becoming the sovereign of the kshatriyas. O king! But in my

view, you are incapable of performing the rajasuya as long as the immensely powerful Jarasandha is alive. He has conquered and imprisoned all the kings in Girivraja,[43] the way a lion imprisons giant elephants in a cavern in that king of mountains.[44] That king Jarasandha wishes to sacrifice the lords of the earth. It was after worshipping Mahadeva that he defeated the kings on the field of battle. After having defeated the vanquished kings and their followers, he took them in fetters to his city and built a prison for men. O great king! Out of fear for Jarasandha, we too have had to abandon Mathura and have fled to the city of Dvaravati. O great king! If you wish to perform the sacrifice, seek to set them free and kill Jarasandha. O descendant of the Kuru lineage! Without this, your sacrifice cannot commence. O supreme among those who are wise! This alone can lead to rajasuya. O king! O unblemished one! This is my view. Do you think otherwise? After reflecting on everything yourself and on cause and effect, tell us what is appropriate."'

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'Yudhishthira said, "Because you are wise, you have said what no one else could have said. No one can be seen on earth who dispels doubts the way you do. In each and every household, there are kings who do that which is for the welfare of their own. But none of them has attained the status of emperor, because the title of emperor encompasses everything. One who knows the power of others does not praise himself. He who is praised in comparison with others is worshipped. The earth is large and extensive and covered with many gems. O extender of the Vrishni lineage! It is by travelling far that one gets to know what is best. I consider tranquillity to be supreme, because from that freedom follows. I do not think the highest goal can be attained if I begin this rite. O Janardana! The wise ones who are born in every lineage know this. Sometimes, one among them will become supreme."

'Bhima said, "A king who has no enterprise is like an anthill. One who tries to rule a stronger one without a plan is weak. But if the plan is right,

even a weak and enterprising king can defeat a strong enemy and attain goals that bring one's welfare. There is plan in Krishna, strength in me and victory in Partha Dhananjaya. Like three sacrificial fires, we will consume Magadha."[45]

'Krishna said, "A child grasps, without understanding the consequences of the action. Therefore, an enemy of immature understanding is not tolerated. We have heard that five have become emperors—Youvanashva by eliminating taxes, Bhagiratha through protection,[46] Kartavirya through the power of his austerities, the lord Bharata through his power and Marutta through his wealth. O bull among the Bharata lineage! Know that in accordance with the principles of dharma and artha, Brihadratha's son Jarasandha is now the one to be punished. One hundred and one dynasties of kings have failed to accept his suzerainty and he therefore claims his empire through force. Kings who possess jewels offer him homage. Since he has been evil from childhood, he is not content even with that. He uses force to conquer foremost men and kings who have been anointed. Not a single man can be seen who does not offer him tribute. O Partha! Thus has he brought under his power those kings, who number almost one hundred. How can a weaker king advance on him with hostile intent? O bull among the Bharata lineage! How can those kings, who have been cleaned and washed like animals in Pashupati's house,[47] be happy with their fate? It has been said that a kshatriya is honoured when he is killed by weapons. Why should we then not collectively oppose the Magadha? O king! Jarasandha has already brought under his sway eighty-six kings and waits for the others to complete his cruel act.[48] He who obstructs him from accomplishing this will obtain blazing fame. He who defeats Jarasandha will certainly become emperor."'

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'Yudhishthira said, "Intent on my selfish interest of becoming an emperor, how can I force you to go out, depending on strength and courage alone? Bhima and Arjuna are my eyes and you, Janardana, are my mind. What

kind of life will be left for me without my eyes and my mind? When you have met Jarasandha's invincible and valorous forces, exhaustion alone will defeat you. What will your efforts serve? There is disaster if the opposite of what is intended becomes the outcome. O Janardana! Listen to my thoughts. I think it best to always refrain from this course of action. My heart is against it. The rajasuya is too difficult to accomplish."'

Vaishampayana said, 'Partha,[49] who had obtained the supreme bow, the two inexhaustible quivers, the chariot, the pennant and the sabha,[50] now spoke these words to Yudhishthira. "O king! I have obtained the bow, weapons, arrows, valour, allies, land, fame and strength. Though they are desired, it is difficult to achieve them. Those who are learned always praise the greatness of noble lineage. But nothing equals power and nothing pleases me as much as valour. What purpose is served if one is born in noble lineage, but has no valour? O king! A kshatriya's livelihood is always defeat.[51] He who has valour, but lacks all other qualities, will still vanquish his enemies. What purpose is served if one possesses all the qualities, but lacks valour? All qualities exist in nascent form in valour. Mental concentration, enterprise and fortune are the causes of victory. One who possesses the forces, but is careless, does not succeed and is not favoured by fortune. It is because of this that a powerful one perishes when confronted with his foes. Misery encompasses those without strength and also strong ones who are deluded. A king who wishes to attain victory must forsake both these routes to destruction. There is nothing that can surpass the act of destroying Jarasandha and freeing the kings when achieving the sacrifice. If we do not attempt this, we will certainly be regarded as bereft of all qualities. O king! We certainly possess the qualities. Why do you doubt our qualities? Red garments are easily available to those who later wish to obtain peace of mind.[52] But wishing to see you emperor first, we will therefore fight with the enemy."'

‘Vasudeva said, “Arjuna has exhibited the mind of one born in the Bharata lineage, especially of one who is Kunti’s son. We do not know the time of our death, whether it will be night or day. Nor have we heard of anyone attaining immortality by avoiding battle. For any man, the act that pleases the heart is one of attacking enemies in accordance with principles that are laid down. Any encounter guided by good policy attains success. However, if both sides are equal, there is uncertainty.[53] But equality between the two never happens. If that is the case, why should we not adopt a policy to approach the enemy and destroy him like a river destroying a tree? We will cover our weaknesses and exploit those of the enemy. It is the policy of the intelligent not to attack stronger enemies with battle formations and armies. This appeals to me too. If we can enter the enemy’s abode without armies, attack him and attain our objective, we will not be blamed. O bull among men! He[54] alone enjoys eternal royal fortune, like the soul of all beings. But if he perishes, his forces perish. Desiring to free our relatives, even if we are killed by his survivors after we have killed him in battle, we will attain heaven.”

‘Yudhishthira asked, “O Krishna! Who is this Jarasandha? What is his valour and his prowess that he has not been burnt up when he touched you, like a moth before a flame?”

‘Krishna replied, “O king! Listen to Jarasandha’s valour and prowess. Learn why he has been spared by us, though he has caused us displeasure in many ways. There was a king named Brihadratha. He was the powerful ruler and lord of Magadha. He was proud in battle and had three *akshouhini*s.[55] He was handsome, valorous, fortunate and extremely powerful. His body always had sacrificial marks and he had the appearance of a second Shakra. He was like the sun’s energy, like the earth in forbearance, like the destroyer Yama in his anger and like Vaishravana[56] in prosperity. O supreme among those of the Bharata lineage! Like the rays of the sun, the entire earth was covered by qualities his noble lineage brought. O bull among those of the Bharata lineage! That immensely valorous one married the twin daughters of the king of Kashi,

blessed with beauty and riches. That bull among men had a contract in the presence of his wives that he would love them equally and not show preferences. O lord of men! This king then shone with his beloved and suitable wives, like elephant with two she-elephants. Between them, the lord of the earth was resplendent, like the embodied ocean between the Ganga and the Yamuna. His youth passed away, immersed in pleasures. But no son was born to him to carry forward his lineage, though he performed many auspicious rites, oblations and sacrifices, so as to obtain a son. But the best of kings did not obtain a son to extend his lineage. One day, he heard that Chandakoushika, the son of the great-souled Kakshivat, descended from Goutama, had become tired of ascetic pursuits. Roaming as he willed, he had come and had sought shelter under a tree. The king and his wives satisfied him with offerings of all kinds of jewels. That supreme among rishis was always truthful and devoted to the truth. He spoke to the king thus. 'O king! I am satisfied with you, you who are devoted to your vows. Ask for a boon.' Brihadratha and his wives bowed down before him. In a voice choked with tears of despair, since there was no prospect of setting eyes on a son, Brihadratha said, 'O illustrious lord! I am about to give up my kingdom and depart for the austerities of the forest. I am unfortunate. What will I do with a boon or with the kingdom?' On hearing this, the sage, seated under the shade of a mango tree, controlled his senses and began to meditate.

'"A mango fell into the lap of the seated sage. It was whole, without holes and without being touched by the beaks of birds. That supreme among sages picked it up, and pronouncing a mantra over it, handed the king that unblemished fruit, as means of obtaining a son. The immensely wise great sage spoke to the king. 'O king! Depart. Your wish has been fulfilled. O lord of men! Return.' O bull among the Bharata lineage! Remembering the contract, that supreme of kings gave the single fruit to his two wives. Dividing the fruit into two equal parts, the beautiful ones ate it. The sage always spoke the truth and what he had said was certain. They both conceived as a result of eating the fruit. On seeing them, the king became extremely happy. O king! O immensely wise one! After some

time, when the appropriate time arrived, the two queens gave birth to two half-bodies. Each had one eye, one arm, one leg, half a stomach, half a face and half a buttock. At the sight of these half-bodies, the two of them were miserable and trembled. The anxious sisters consulted each other. In great misery, they abandoned the two half-bodies, though they had life in them. The two midwives carefully wrapped up those imperfectly born half-bodies and left the inner quarters through a back gate. Discarding them, they returned in haste.

‘“O tiger among men! There was a rakshasa woman named Jara and she noticed them, where they had been thrown at a crossroad. She lived on flesh and blood. Driven by destiny, that rakshasa woman united the two bodies, as it would become easier to carry. O bull among men! As soon as the two halves were united, they became one body and a brave child emerged. O king! The rakshasa woman’s eyes widened in amazement. She was no longer able to carry the child, whose body was as hard as a vajra. The child balled his copper-red hands into fists, inserted them in his mouth and began to roar, like a monsoon cloud heavy with rain. O tiger among men! O destroyer of enemies! Extremely alarmed at this sound, the inmates of the inner quarters rushed out, together with the king. Weak and jaded, though their breasts were full of milk, the two queens suddenly came out and reclaimed their son. On seeing them in that condition and on seeing the king, who was so desirous of obtaining a son, and also on seeing the strong child, the rakshasa woman reflected, ‘I live in the kingdom of a king who desires to obtain a son. Therefore, I should not carry off this small child, like a strip of cloud hides the sun.’ Assuming human form, she spoke to the lord of men. The rakshasa said, ‘O Brihadratha! This is your son. Accept him from me as a gift. He was born in the wombs of your two wives, as a result of the boon granted by the brahmana. He was abandoned by the midwives, but has been saved by me.’ O supreme among those of the Bharata lineage! At that, on obtaining the son, the beautiful daughters of the king of Kashi sprinkled him with the milk that was gushing out. Having seen all this and understood, the king was delighted. In human form, with a complexion like that of pure gold, the rakshasa

woman did not look like a rakshasa at all. The king asked, ‘Who are you, as golden as the womb of a lotus? You have given me my son. O fortunate one! You appear to me like a goddess. Please speak.’”’

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‘“The rakshasa said, ‘O lord of kings! O fortunate one! I am a rakshasa woman named Jara, who can assume any form at will. Worshipped by everyone, I live happily in your habitation. O righteous one! O king! Therefore, I have always thought about offering you a favour in return. It so happened that I saw the two half-bodies of your son. On my accidentally uniting them, the son surfaced. O great king! This was because of your own good fortune. I was only the instrument.’”

‘Krishna said, “O king! Having said this, she disappeared, then and there. The king picked up the boy and entered his own house. The king then performed all the necessary rites for the child. He commanded that a great festival should be held in Magadha in honour of the rakshasa. The father was the equal of Prajapati[57] and bestowed a name on him. Since he had been united by Jara, he came to be known as Jarasandha.[58] The son of the king of Magadha grew up and became endowed with great energy, large and strong like a fire into which oblations have been offered.

‘“After some time had passed, Chandakoushika, the illustrious and great ascetic, once again came to Magadha. Delighted at his arrival, Brihadratha went out with his advisers, subjects, wives and son. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! The king showed him homage with water for washing the feet, gifts due to a guest and water to wash his mouth. Then he offered him his son and his kingdom. O king! The illustrious rishi accepted the king’s worship and with a happy heart, told the one from Magadha,[59] ‘O king! Everything is known to me through my divine sight. O Indra among kings! Listen to what will happen to your son. No king will be able to equal this valorous one in valour. O lord of the earth! Like the currents of rivers make no impression on mountains, weapons hurled by the gods will cause him no pain. He will blaze forth over the heads of all those who have been

consecrated[60] and rob their light the way the sun shines over the lights of stars. Like moths to a flame, kings who possess large armies and mounts will meet their destruction before him. Like the lord of rivers and rivulets[61] receives swollen river water during the monsoon, he will seize the combined prosperity of all the kings. Like the earth, the abode of all crops, extensively supports good and evil, with immense strength, he will justly uphold the four varnas. All the rulers of men will be under his subjugation, just as all beings are subservient to the breath of life in their bodies. This Magadha,[62] immensely stronger than everything in all the worlds, will witness with his own eyes Rudra Mahadeva Hara, the destroyer of Tripura.'[63] O destroyer of your enemies! Having said this, the sage thought about all the acts he had to perform and dismissed King Brihadratha.

'"With his relatives and kin, the ruler of Magadha returned to his city and instated Jarasandha. King Brihadratha became detached from worldly pleasures. After instating Jarasandha, King Brihadratha, followed by his two wives, then left for the forest to lead a life of austerities. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! After his father and two mothers had retired to the forest for austerities, Jarasandha subjugated the kings with his own valour. After a long time of austerities in the forest, King Brihadratha and his wives attained heaven by virtue of their austerities. He had Hamsa and Dibhaka, incapable of being killed with any weapons. They were best among the intelligent in their counsel and skilled in the art of war. I have already told you about these mighty ones earlier. My view is that these three were more than a match for the three worlds. O valorous one! O great king! Such is the one whom the powerful Kukuras, Andhakas and Vrishnis[64] ignored, because that was the right policy."'

Section Twenty-Two

Jarasandha-vadha Parva

This section has 195 shlokas and five chapters.

Chapter 243(18): 30 shlokas
Chapter 244(19): 50 shlokas
Chapter 245(20): 34 shlokas
Chapter 246(21): 23 shlokas
Chapter 247(22): 58 shlokas

The word vadha *is the act of killing. This section is therefore about the killing of Jarasandha.*

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‘Vasudeva said, “Hamsa and Dibhaka have fallen. Kamsa and his advisers have been killed. The time has therefore arrived for Jarasandha’s killing. He is incapable of being defeated in battle by all the gods and the demons. But we understand he is capable of being vanquished in a battle of breath.[1] Policy exists in me. Power exists in Bhima. Valour exists in Arjuna. O king! We will overcome him like three fires. If that lord of men is confronted by the three of us alone, there is no doubt that he will engage one of us in a duel. Out of contempt for the worlds and his pride in himself, he will certainly challenge Bhimasena to a duel. The mighty-armed and immensely strong Bhimasena is his match, like death is of the worlds that confront their destruction. If your heart knows and if you have confidence in me, then, without losing any more time, entrust Bhimasena and Arjuna to me.”’

Vaishampayana said, ‘Having been thus addressed by that illustrious one and on seeing Bhima and Partha[2] standing there with smiles on their faces, Yudhishthira replied, “O Achyuta! O Achyuta! Do not speak to me in that fashion. You are the lord of the Pandavas. We seek refuge with you. O Govinda! Everything that you have said is right. You never lead those whom Lakshmi has forsaken. As I follow your instruction, Jarasandha is dead. The kings have been set free. I have achieved the rajasuya. O supreme among men! You are the one who acts fast. Act so that I can accomplish this task for the world. Like a miserable and diseased man and like one without dharma, kama and artha, I have no incentive to live without the three of you. There is no Partha[3] without Shouri[4] and there is no Shouri without Pandava.[5] It is my view that there is nothing in the world that cannot be conquered by the two Krishnas.[6] This handsome Vrikodara is supreme among all strong ones. What can this immensely famous and valorous one not accomplish when he is with the two of you? When led properly, forces perform supreme deeds. The learned say that forces without skilled leadership are blind and benumbed. The wise always conduct water to places that are low. Those who are wise always lead their forces to places where there are holes.[7] For accomplishing our task, we will therefore seek refuge with Govinda, who is a man famous in the worlds and is knowledgeable about policy. Krishna’s strength comes from his wisdom and he knows the method and the means. If one wishes to accomplish one’s objectives, one should place him at the forefront. For the accomplishment of our objective, let Partha Arjuna follow Krishna, the best of the Yadavas, and let Bhima follow Dhananjaya. Policy, victory and strength will find success in valour.” Having been thus addressed, the three brothers,[8] Varshneya and the two Pandavas, left for Magadha.

‘They were radiant in the attire of brahmanas who had completed their studies.[9] Their well-wishers bade them farewell with affectionate words. Their bodies were like the sun, the moon and the fire. Inflamed with anger at the oppression of their relatives, their bodies were then terrible to

behold. On seeing the two Krishnas, invincible in battle, united in the same purpose and with Bhima at their forefront, it was thought that Jarasandha was already dead. The two great-souled ones were the lords of all deeds, everything that drove the deeds of dharma, artha and kama. Having left the land of the Kurus, and traversing the middle of Kurujangala,[10] they reached the beautiful Padmasara[11] and traversed Kalakuta.[12] They then crossed Gandaki and Shona and Sadanira.[13] All these rivers arise from that same mountain. After crossing the beautiful Sarayu, they saw the eastern Koshala kingdom.[14] Passing through it, they went to Mithila, crossing the rivers Mala and Charmanvati.[15] Crossing the Ganga and the Shona, all the three headed eastwards and arrived at the indestructibe region of Magadha, covered with *kurava* trees.[16] Ascending Mount Goratha, they saw the city of Magadha,[17] always resplendent with cattle, overflowing with water and full of beautiful groves.'

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'Vasudeva said, "O Partha! This is the great and beautiful city of Magadha. It is rich in cattle and is always full of water. It is prosperous and has no disease and has many splendid mansions. O *tata*![18] There are five large mountains, the extensive Vaihara, Varaha, Vrishabha, Rishigiri and the beautiful Chaitya.[19] These five giant mountain peaks are covered with trees with cool shade and though separate, seem to collectively protect Girivraja. They seem to be concealed in a forest of fragrant and beautiful *lodhra* trees,[20] beloved by lovers, and with the tips of their branches covered with blossoms. It was here that the great-souled sage Goutama, rigid in his vows, begot on Ushinara's shudra daughter, sons like Kakshivana. Because he lived here in this place and because the kings here showed him homage, Goutama loved the Magadha lineage. O Arjuna! It was here that, once upon a time, Anga, Vanga and other greatly powerful kings came to Goutama's abode and found happiness. O Partha! Behold the

beautiful array of *priyalas*[21] and the charming lodhras, growing near Goutama's abode. Arbuda and Shakravapi, serpents who scorched their enemies, lived here. This was the abode of Svastika and the supreme serpent Mani. Because of Mani, Magadha is never avoided by clouds.[22] Koushika and Goutama have indeed extended their favours here. Jarasandha imagines that the success of his objectives will continue. But we are about to attack him and today, his pride will be struck down."'

Vaishampayana said, 'After these words, all the brothers, Varshneya and the two Pandavas, with immense vigour, started for the city of Magadha and neared the impregnable Girivraja. The city was full of cheerful and healthy citizens, with large numbers of the four varnas and enlivened with festivities. They avoided the giant mountain that was the gate of the city, a place where Brihadratha's descendants and the citizens used to worship. That is the place where Brihadratha killed the bean-eating Rishabha.[23] Having killed the bean-eater, he had three kettledrums made and stretching the hide over them, had these placed in his city.[24] There, divine blossoms showered when the kettledrums were sounded. They rushed to the end where Chaitya[25] was, beloved by inhabitants of Magadha. In their desire to kill Jarasandha, it was like placing their feet on his head.[26] The peak was fixed, immensely large and ancient. It was always worshipped with flowers and garlands and was firmly established. With their large and mighty arms, the heroes broke it down.[27] They then saw the city of Magadha and entered it.

'At that time, the priests were showing homage to King Jarasandha. While he was seated on an elephant, they carried the sacred fire around him. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! The three of them entered, ready to do battle with Jarasandha, dressed as devoted snatakas, and with no weapons other than their bare arms. They saw the supremely prosperous shops, stocked with food and garlands, swollen with objects of every quality and with every object that satisfies desire. Having witnessed the prosperity along the streets, those supreme of men, Krishna, Bhima

and Dhananjaya, proceeded along the royal road and those immensely powerful ones forcibly grabbed garlands from a garland-maker. Then, attired in many-coloured garments, adorned with garlands and beautiful earrings, they entered the palace of the wise Jarasandha, like lions from the Himalayas looking at a pen full of cattle. O great king! The arms of those mighty-armed warriors were smeared with sandal and aloe paste. They shone in radiance, like pillars made of rock. On seeing them, as large as elephants, with shoulders and chests as tall and broad as shala trees, the inhabitants of Magadha were astounded. Those bulls among men, immensely strong, passed through three rooms that were full of people and proudly arrived before the king.

'Jarasandha arose and greeted them and showed them homage with water to wash the feet, gifts due to a guest and a mixture with honey,[28] as is prescribed. Having shown these courtesies, the lordly king welcomed them. O king! This was because this was the vow, famous on earth, which he followed. Whenever he learned that snataka brahmanas had arrived, even if it was the middle of the night, the king who was a conqueror arose to greet them. On seeing their strange attire, Jarasandha, supreme among kings, approached them and was astonished. O supreme among the Bharata lineage! As soon as those bulls among men and slayers of enemies saw Jarasandha, they spoke thus. "O king! May there be health and welfare for you in everything." O tiger among kings! Having said this, they stood there, looking at the king and at each other. O Indra among kings! Jarasandha then told the Pandavas and the Yadava, who were disguised as brahmanas, "Please be seated." Blazing in radiance like fires at a sacrifice, those three bulls among men then took their seats.

'O descendant of the Kuru lineage! Then King Jarasandha, always devoted to the truth, spoke to them in a tone of disapproval, because of the way they were dressed, "This much is known to me. Nowhere on earth, nowhere in the world of men, do brahmanas who observe the snataka vow ever outwardly adorn themselves with garlands or fragrant paste. Who are you, thus adorned in flowers, though your arms bear the marks of wielding bowstrings? You seem to be brahmanas, but you bear the proud signs of

kshatriyas. You are dressed in colourful attire and you outwardly sport garlands and fragrant paste. Tell me who you truly are, truth is the ornament of kings. Why did you break down the Chaitya mountain and enter my abode by means other than through the proper gate? Are you so fearless as to insult the king? This act does not mesh with your purported character. So tell me what your intention is. The brahmana's valour is particularly in his speech. You have arrived before me in this inappropriate way and you decline to accept the homage I offer you in courtesy. Why have you come to me?" At these words, the great-souled Krishna, skilled in the use of words, replied in words that were both serene and grave. "O king! Know that brahmanas, kshatriyas and vaishyas all possess the right to observe snataka vows. There are rules that are general and those that are specific. A kshatriya who observes specific rules always obtains great prosperity. Good fortune is certain for those who adorn themselves with flowers and we have therefore worn them. A kshatriya's valour is in his arms, his valour is not in the power of speech. O son of Brihadratha! It has thus been said that his speech is never bold. O king! Brahma has placed his own energy in the arms of kshatriyas. If you wish to witness it, there is no doubt that you will witness it today. The wise always enter the house of a well-wisher through a gate, but use that which is not a gate for the house of an enemy. That is the reason we have avoided your gate. Know that whenever we enter the house of an enemy to accomplish an objective, we never accept his homage. That is our eternal vow."'

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'Jarasandha said, "I do not recall that I have ever exhibited any enmity towards you. After reflection, I cannot see any evil act I have done towards you. O brahmanas! If I have never done an evil act and am innocent, why do you regard me as an enemy? Tell me honestly, because that is the principle followed by the truthful. There is no doubt that if injury is done to an innocent man, there is a violation of dharma and one's mind suffers, even if one is a kshatriya. A man may be knowledgeable in the ways of dharma and may be great in the rigid observance of vows, but if he acts

perversely and wickedly, he hurts his own welfare. You know that in the three worlds, I am supreme among righteous ones in the practice of the dharma of kshatriyas. I never hurt my subjects. Therefore, you speak in delusion."

'Vasudeva replied, "O great king! There is someone from a lineage who has to undertake the tasks that lineage requires. The three of us have acted against you at his request. O king! The kshatriyas who live in this world have been abducted by you. Having committed this cruel act, how can you think of yourself as innocent? O supreme among kings! How can a king do violence to honest kings? Having oppressed the kings, you wish to sacrifice them to Rudra. O Brihadratha's son! This act of yours may touch us too. We follow dharma and are capable of protecting dharma. Human sacrifices have never been seen. Why do you wish to sacrifice humans to the god Shankara? You are of the same varna. Yet, you are treating those of the same varna as animals. O Jarasandha! Is there any other mind that is as perverted as yours? We help all those who are distressed. For the protection of our kin, we have come here to counter you, the one who is acting so as to destroy our kin. O king! If you think that there is no man among the kshatriyas of this world who can do this, your mind is greatly deluded. O king! Which kshatriya who knows the nature of his own noble birth will not wish to attain unparalleled heaven by falling in the field of battle? O ruler of Magadha! With their minds on heaven, know that kshatriyas of the world are consecrated in the sacrifice of battles and worship them. O king! Victory is the womb of heaven. Great fame is the womb of heaven. Austerities are the womb of heaven and so is the straight route of battle. These are the qualities of the ever-victorious Indra. It is by being focussed on this that Shatakratu defeated the demons and is the protector of the world. What can be a better road to heaven than a battle with someone like you, since you are proud of the strength of your extensive Magadha army? O king! Do not deprecate others. Valour exists in every man. O lord of men! You are superior only if you don't know of valour equal to yours and as long as glory equal to yours is not known. O king! Listen to me when I say we are capable of equalling it. O Magadha!

Conquer your ego and pride when you are in the presence of your equals. Do not go to Yama's abode with your sons, your ministers and your armies. Dambhodbhava, Kartyavirya, Uttara and Brihadratha—these kings and their forces were destroyed here, because they ignored their superiors. We who wish to liberate the captive kings are not self-proclaimed brahmanas. I am Shouri Hrishikesha[29] and these two brave men are the two Pandavas. O king! O Magadha! Stand firm. We are challenging you. Either liberate all the kings or go to Yama's abode."

'Jarasandha said, "I never take a king until I have vanquished him. Who is here who has not been vanquished? Whom have I not conquered? O Krishna! It has been said that the livelihood and dharma of kshatriyas is to bring others under his sway through valour and then do as he pleases. O Krishna! These kings have been collected for a divine purpose. Remembering the duty of kshatriyas, how can I free them today out of fear? I am prepared to fight—army against army, one against one, or one against two or three, all at the same time, or separately."'

Vaishampayana said, 'Having said this, the king gave orders that Sahadeva should be instated[30] and readied himself to do battle with those whose deeds were terrible. O bull among the Bharata lineage! O king! When the time for battle approached, the king remembered his generals Koushika and Chitrasena, whose names in this world had been Hamsa and Dibhaka. These were names that had earlier been renowned and worshipped by all the people in the world of men. O king! O tiger among men! And the lord Shouri, supreme among strong ones, with a valour equal to that of tigers, also remembered. This did the truthful Achyuta remember. It had been destined that Jarasandha would be killed by the valorous Bhima. Madhusudana, the younger brother of Haladhara, foremost among those who have controlled themselves, wished to show respect to Brahma and did not wish to kill him himself.'

Vaishampayana said, ‘Then Adhokshaja,[31] descendant of the Yadu lineage and eloquent in speech, spoke to King Jarasandha, who had resolved to do battle. “O king! With which one of us three have you made up your mind to fight? Who among us should be ready for the battle?” O king! Having been thus addressed by Krishna, the immensely radiant Magadha Jarasandha decided to do battle with Bhimasena. The priest brought chief herbs for alleviating pain and restoring consciousness to Jarasandha, who was impatient for the fight. A famous and learned brahmana performed the benedictions. In accordance with the dharma of kshatriyas, Jarasandha dressed himself appropriately. He removed his crown and tied up his hair. Jarasandha arose like an ocean that bursts through the shoreline. The intelligent king spoke to Bhima, whose valour was terrible. “O Bhima! I will fight with you. It is better to be vanquished by a superior one.” Having said this, the immensely energetic Jarasandha, conqueror of enemies, rushed at Bhimasena, like the demon Bali once rushed at Shakra.

‘After consultations with Krishna, the powerful Bhimasena had also had benedictions performed and, eager to fight, advanced towards Jarasandha. Those two supreme warriors, tigers among men and armed only with their bare arms, engaged each other, extremely eager and each desiring to defeat the other. The sounds of grasping, holding and releasing of the arms then resounded with a terrible roar, like the roar of thunderbolts striking mountains. Both of them were the strongest among those who were strong and were supreme in their eagerness. Desiring victory, each sought to exploit weaknesses in the other. O king! This duel between the powerful ones was like that between Vasava and Vritra and the terrible duel sometimes drove away the crowds that were near.[32] They pulled each other forward and broke away from each other’s holds. They threw the other one down and to the sides, dragging and grabbing the thighs. They insulted each other in loud words. They struck each other with rock-like blows. With broad shoulders and long arms, the two skilled fighters rained blows on each other with arms that were like iron clubs.

‘The duel started on the first day of the month of Kartika. Ceaselessly, it went on day and night. The great-souled fighters were still engaged on the thirteenth day. But on the night of the fourteenth day, the Magadha withdrew, as he was exhausted. O king! On seeing that the king was tired, Janardana spoke, as if to Bhima of the terrible deeds.[33] “O Kounteya![34] One should not press down on an enemy who is weakened in battle. If pressed down at such a time, he might completely give up his soul. O Kounteya! Therefore, you should not press down upon the king. O bull among the Bharatas! Fight him with your arms, so that he can be an equal.” From these words of Krishna, the Pandava,[35] the destroyer of enemy warriors, got to know Jarasandha’s weakness and determined to kill him. Vrikodara, descendant of the Kuru lineage and chief among those who are strong, then seized the unvanquished Jarasandha, with the intention of vanquishing him.’

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Vaishampayana said, ‘With his mind firmly set on the desire of killing Jarasandha, Bhimasena then spoke to Krishna of the Yadava lineage, “O Krishna! O tiger among the Yadu lineage! Now that I have girded up my loincloth, this evil one shouldn’t be spared by me of his life.” Having been thus addressed, Krishna, tiger among men, then replied to Vrikodara, so as to rush him, because he wanted to see Jarasandha dead, “O Bhima! Then quickly show us the spirit that you have got from the gods and the power you have got from the wind.[36] Show it on Jarasandha.” At these words, the immensely strong Bhima, the destroyer of enemies, lifted up the powerful Jarasandha. O bull among the Bharata lineage! O king! He whirled him around one hundred times. Then throwing him down on his knee, he broke his back into two. Trampling him down, he roared out aloud. When Jarasandha was thus pressed down and the Pandava roared, there was such a loud roar that all beings were terrified. All those from Magadha were benumbed and expectant women aborted, on hearing Bhimasena and Jarasandha’s roars. Has the Himalaya Mountain, or the earth, been torn

apart? On hearing Bhimasena's roars, this is what the residents of Magadha thought. At night, the destroyers of enemies left the king's dead body at the gate of the palace, as if he was asleep, and left.

'Krishna had Jarasandha's chariot, with pennants, yoked. He asked the two brothers to ascend it and set his relatives[37] free. Having been freed from their great fear, the kings and lords of the earth presented many gems to Krishna, worthy of bearing gems. Unhurt, armed with weapons and vanquishing his enemy, he[38] mounted the divine chariot and left Girivraja with the kings. With the two brothers as warriors[39] and with Krishna as the charioteer, the chariot was incapable of being conquered by all the kings and seemed to be always killing. With the two warriors Bhima and Arjuna riding in it and with Krishna as the charioteer, the beautiful chariot was radiant and invincible to all archers. It was on this chariot that Shakra and Vishnu had fought in the battle that Taraka[40] had caused. It was this chariot that Krishna ascended and left. It glittered like molten gold and was garlanded with nets of small bells. It thundered like rain-bearing clouds. It was always victorious in battle and it always killed its enemies. It was on this chariot that Shakra had killed ninety-nine demons. Having obtained this chariot, those bulls among men rejoiced.

'Then, on seeing the mighty-armed Krishna and his two brothers on the chariots, the citizens of Magadha were amazed. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Divine horses, with the speed of the wind, were yoked to the chariot. When Krishna ascended it, it looked extremely beautiful. On that supreme chariot there was a flagstaff that did not seem to be attached to it at all. It was divine in origin, beautiful and with radiance that was like that of Indra's weapons. It could be seen from a distance of one yojana. Krishna thought of Garuda and he immediately arrived, the instant he had been thought of, like the tall pillar of a temple.[41] Garuda, eater of serpents, then sat on that supreme chariot on the flagstaff, together with many other blazing beings that had their mouths open and roared loudly. Incapable of being seen by those beings, his blazing energy was like the midday sun with its one thousand rays. O king! That beautiful flagstaff

never knocked against a tree. It was never injured by weapons. Though it was visible to gods and men, it was divine in origin. Achyuta, tiger among men, left on that divine chariot with the two Pandavas, with the sound like that of thunder. King Vasu had obtained it from Vasava and Brihadratha from Vasu. In due course, it had passed from Brihadratha to the king who was Brihadratha's son. The mighty-armed and immensely illustrious Pundarikaksha came out from Girivraja and stopped on the level ground outside.

'O king! All the citizens, with the brahmanas in the forefront, approached him there to show homage, in accordance with the prescribed rites. The kings who had been liberated from their bondage, worshipped Madhusudana with words of praise. "O mighty-armed! O son of Devaki! Aided by the strength of Bhima and Arjuna, it is not surprising that the protection of dharma should be vested in you. Today, you have accomplished the task of rescuing kings who had been miserably immersed in Jarasandha's terrible mire of a lake. O Vishnu! O supreme among men! We languished in that terrible mountain fortress. It is our destiny that we have been freed and you have obtained blazing fame. O tiger among men! O bull among men! Please tell us what we should do. However difficult may be the task, know that the kings will accomplish it." Reassuring them, the great-minded Hrishikesha said, "Yudhishthira wishes to perform the rajasuya. He who lives by dharma wishes to become a sovereign emperor. All of you must aid him in the sacrifice." O bull among the Bharata lineage! Then all those kings gave their words with happy hearts. The lords of the earth then made Dasharha[42] share in their riches. Though disinclined, Govinda accepted, out of affection towards them.

'The maharatha Sahadeva, Jarasandha's son, came out with his relatives and his advisers, with the priest at the forefront. Sahadeva bowed down low before Vasudeva, god among men, and bowed down in homage, with presents of many gems. Krishna provided assurances to the frightened one. Then and there, he instated Jarasandha's son.[43] Having been allied with

Krishna and having obtained homage from the two Parthas,[44] the intelligent king again entered Brihadratha's city. The lotus-eyed Krishna, resplendent with supreme radiance and laden with many riches, left with the two Parthas.

'Achuyta and the two Pandavas went to Indraprastha. On meeting Dharmaraja, he happily said, "O supreme among kings! Through good fortune, Bhima has killed the mighty Jarasandha. The kings who were imprisoned have been set free. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Through good fortune, the skilled Bhimasena and Dhananjaya are well. They have returned unharmed to their own city." Then Yudhishthira worshipped Krishna, as he deserved. He embraced Bhima and Arjuna in delight. Having eliminated Jarasandha and obtained victory through his brothers, Ajatashatru enjoyed himself with his brothers. The Pandava[45] and his brothers then went to the freed kings[46] and in accordance with age, showed them homage and paid their respects. They then gave them leave to depart. Having been thus instructed by Yudhishthira, the kings swiftly left for their own respective kingdoms on their different mounts, happy in their hearts. Thus did the immensely intelligent Janardana, tiger among men, get his enemy Jarasandha killed through the Pandavas. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Having ensured Jarasandha's killing through his intelligence, that conqueror of enemies[47] then took leave from Dharmaraja, Pritha and Krishna[48] and from Subhadra, Bhimasena, Phalguna[49] and the twins. Having taken leave of Dhoumya, he prepared to leave for his own city in that chief divine chariot, radiant as the bright morning sun. It had been given to him by Dharmaraja and it thundered over the directions. O bull among the Bharata lineage! Led by Yudhishthira, the Pandavas circumambulated Krishna, whose deeds never decay. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! When the illustrious Krishna, Devaki's son, departed, the Pandavas obtained great glory. They had won a great victory and had provided security to the kings. This deed added to that. O king! They themselves found great joy in Droupadi. The king[50]

was then famous for the protection of his kingdom and in accordance with dharma, did whatever was consistent with dharma, kama and artha.'

Section Twenty-Three

Digvijaya Parva

This section has 191 shlokas and seven chapters.

Chapter 248(23): 26 shlokas
Chapter 249(24): 27 shlokas
Chapter 250(25): 20 shlokas
Chapter 251(26): 16 shlokas
Chapter 252(27): 28 shlokas
Chapter 253(28): 55 shlokas
Chapter 254(29): 19 shlokas

The word digvijaya *means the conquest of the directions, that is, the conquest of the world. This section is therefore about the conquest undertaken by the Pandavas.*

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Vaishampayana said, ‘Partha had obtained the supreme bow, the two inexhaustible quivers, the chariot, the flag and the sabha. He told Yudhishthira, “O king! I have the bow, weapons, arrows, valour, allies, land, fame and strength and whatever men desire and find difficult to obtain. O supreme among kings! I think we should act so as to extend our treasury. I wish to make other kings pay us tribute. On an auspicious day, moment and nakshatra, I will set out to conquer the region protected by Dhanada.”[1] On hearing Dhananjaya, Dharmaraja Yudhishthira replied in words that were soft and grave. “O bull among the Bharata lineage! Go, but only after brahmanas have uttered benedictions on you, so that our well-wishers may be delighted and our enemies immersed in grief. O

Partha! Your victory is certain. Your desires will undoubtedly be fulfilled." Having heard this, Partha set out with a large army. He set out on the divine chariot, performer of extraordinary deeds, given by Agni. In similar fashion, Bhimasena and the twins, bulls among men, also worshipped Dharmaraja and set out with their armies. The son of the one who vanquished Paka[2] conquered all the regions protected by the lord of wealth—Bhimasena the east, Sahadeva the south and Nakula, skilled in the use of all weapons, conquered the west. O king! Dharmaraja Yudhishthira remained in Khandavaprastha.'

Janamejaya said, 'O brahmana! Please tell me in great detail the directions of their conquests, because I never tire of hearing about the great characters of my ancestors.'

Vaishampayana said, 'The sons of Pritha conquered the earth at the same time. I will first tell you about Dhananjaya's conquest. With great force, the mighty-armed Dhananjaya first conquered the kings of the land of Kuninda.[3] After conquering the Anartas,[4] Kalakutas and Kunindas, he placed Sumandala, the conqueror of evil, in charge of the rear of his army. O king! Together with him, Savyasachi, the scorcher of enemies, vanquished the land of Shakala[5] and King Prativindhya, the king of Shakala. Shakala was one of the seven regions[6] and there was a tumultuous battle between Arjuna and the armies of the kings of Shakala.[7] O bull among the Bharata lineage! After defeating all of them, the mighty archer attacked Pragjyotisha.[8] O lord of the earth! There was a mighty king named Bhagadatta there and the great-souled Pandava fought a great battle with him. Pragjyotisha was surrounded by kiratas, *chinas*[9] and many other warriors who lived along the shores of the ocean.[10] Having continuously fought with Dhananjaya for eight days and finding him to be still untiring on the field of battle, the king smilingly said, "O mighty-armed one! O descendant of the Kuru lineage! O son of the chastiser of Paka! This blazing valour in battle is appropriate for you. O son![11] I am a friend of Indra of the gods and can withstand Shakra in battle. But I cannot

withstand you in battle. O Pandava! What is it that you want? What can I do for you? O mighty-armed one! O son! Tell me. I will do what you wish." Arjuna replied, "King Yudhishthira, the son of dharma, is a bull among the Kurus. I wish that he may become the sovereign and others pay him tribute. You are my father's friend and have been affectionate towards me too. Therefore, I cannot command you. Please pay it[12] happily." Bhagadatta said, "O son of Kunti! You are to me the way King Yudhishthira is. I will do all that. What else can I do for you?"'

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Vaishampayana said, 'Having thus conquered him, Kunti's son, the mighty-armed Dhananjaya then went towards the north, protected by the lord of riches.[13] Kounteya, bull among men, conquered the inner mountains, the outer mountains and the upper mountains. Having conquered all the mountains and all the kings who lived there, he brought them under his sway and extracted riches from all of them. O king! Having won the riches and the loyalty of those kings, he marched with them against Brihanta, who lived in Kuluta. The earth trembled with the sound of his supreme drums, the clatter of the edges of his chariot wheels and the roar of his elephants.

'The young Brihanta came out from his city with a fourfold army to do battle with Pandava. The battle between Brihanta and Dhananjaya was a great one. But Brihanta was unable to withstand Pandava's valour. Realizing that Kounteya could not be beaten down, the lord of the mountains,[14] whose intelligence was limited,[15] brought him all his riches. O king! Having established the kingdom, he set out with Kuluta[16] and swiftly threw Senabindu out of his kingdom. He then subjugated Modapura, Vamadeva, Sudamana, Susamkula and the northern Kulutas and their kings. O king! Having brought those men under Dharmaraja's rule, Dhananjaya then conquered five countries. On arriving in Divahprastha, Senabindu's great capital, the lord[17] set up a base there, with his fourfold

army. Surrounded by them, that bull among men marched against King Vishvagashva Pourava. O king! After conquering in battle the brave warriors from the mountains, he used his flag-bearing troops to subjugate the city protected by Pourava. After vanquishing Pourava, Pandava defeated the seven mountain-dwelling dacoit tribes known as Utsavasamketa.[18] Then that bull among kshatriyas defeated the valorous kshatriyas from Kashmir and Lohita, using ten encircling armies. O king! Kounteya then took on the Trigartas, the Darvas, the Kokanadas and many other kshatriyas who attacked him collectively. The descendant of the Kuru lineage then conquered the charming city of Abhisari and defeated in battle Rochamana, who lived in Urasha. The son of the chastiser of Paka then conquered beautiful Simhapure, protected by Chitrayudhasura. Then, Kiriti,[19] bull among the Pandavas and descendant of the Kuru lineage, conquered the Suhmas[20] and the Cholas[21] with his entire army. The descendant of the Kuru lineage then conquered Bahlika[22] with supreme valour. They were difficult to defeat, so there was a great battle. Phalgu[23] Pandava, son of the chastiser of Paka, then took a select force and defeated the Daradas and the Kambojas.[24] The lord then defeated the bandits who live towards the north-east and those who live in the forests. Thereafter, the son of the chastiser of Paka subjugated the Lohas, the superior Kambojas and the northern Rishikas. The battle in Rishika, between the superior Rishikas and Partha was a fearful one, like the battle known as *tarakamaya*.[25] O king! After defeating the Rishikas in the field of battle, he extracted eight horses that had the colour of a parrot's breast. There were some others that had the colours of peacocks and still others that had both colours. Having thus conquered in battle the Himalaya and Nishkuta Mountains, the bull among men arrived at the white mountains and began to live there.'

Vaishampayana said, ‘O descendant of the Bharata lineage! After having crossed the white mountains, the brave one arrived at the land where the Kimpurushas lived. They were protected by Drumaputra. There was a great battle in which many kshatriyas were slain. The best of the Pandavas won and extracted tribute. The son of the chastiser of Paka used his army and determination to conquer the region known as Hataka, protected by Guhyaka. Having won them over with conciliation, he set his eyes on the supreme Laka Manasa. He also saw all the places sacred to the rishis. On reaching Manasa, the lord Pandava conquered the regions around Hataka, protected by the gandharvas. As tribute, he obtained from the city of the gandharvas supreme horses that were the colour of partridges and speckled, with eyes like those of frogs. Pandava, son of the chastiser of Paka, then arrived at the northern country of Harivarsha and wished to conquer it too.

‘On seeing him, some doorkeepers appeared. They were giant in form, great in valour and immense in strength. They smilingly told him, “O Partha! You are incapable of conquering this city in any way. O Achyuta![26] If you desire your own welfare, turn back. You already have enough. Any human who enters this city must certainly die. O valorous one! We are pleased with you. Your conquests are already many. O Arjuna! Nothing can be seen here that is left for you to conquer. This is the land of the Northern Kurus and there cannot be any wars here. O Kounteya! Even if you enter, you will not be able to see anything. Nothing that is here can be seen with human eyes. O tiger among men! O descendant of the Bharata lineage! However, if there is anything else that you wish, please tell us. We will do your bidding.” Having been thus addressed, Arjuna, son of the chastiser of Paka said, “I wish that the intelligent Dharmaraja should become an emperor. I shall not enter this land if it is restricted to humans. But let something be given by you as tribute to Yudhishthira.” Then they gave him divine garments, divine ornaments and divine hides and skins as tribute.

‘Thus did that tiger among men conquer the northern regions. He fought many great battles, with kshatriyas, and also with bandits. Having

conquered those kings, he extracted tribute from them and obtained a lot of riches and many jewels, together with horses that had the colour of partridges, were speckled, or had the colour of parrot feathers or those of peacocks. They were all as swift as the wind. O king! Surrounded by a gigantic fourfold army, the brave one returned again to the supreme city of Shakraprastha.'

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Vaishampayana said, 'At the same time, the valorous Bhimasena took his leave from Dharmaraja and left for the eastern direction. That tiger among the Bharata lineage had with him a great circle of forces, capable of oppressing the enemy's kingdom. He marched out to increase the enemy's sorrow. Pandava, tiger among kings, first went to the city of Panchala and used various means of conciliation to win the Panchalas over. Then that valorous one, bull among men, defeated the Gandakis and the Videhas[27] and after some time, went on to Dasharna.[28] There, King Sudharma of Dasharna performed a feat that makes one's hair stand up—he had a great duel with Bhima without any weapons.[29] On witnessing this deed, Bhimasena, the scorcher of enemies, made the immensely strong Sudharma the supreme general. O king! Bhima, terrible in valour, then marched towards the east and that large army seemed to make the earth tremble. O king! That warrior, strongest among the strong, defeated in battle Rochamana, the lord of Ashvamedha, and his younger brother. Without exerting terrible force in vanquishing him, the immensely valorous Kounteya,[30] descendant of the Kuru lineage, then conquered the eastern regions. He then went south to the great city of the Pulindas and conquered Sukumara and Sumitra, the lord of men. O Janamejaya! Then, on Dharmaraja's command, that bull among the Bharata lineage advanced on the immensely brave Shishupala.

'Having heard of Pandava's[31] intention, the king of Chedi,[32] the scorcher of enemies, came out of his city and welcomed him. O great

king! When the bulls among the Kuru and Chedi lineages met, they asked about the welfare of each other's lineages. O lord of the people! The king of Chedi then smilingly offered his kingdom and told Bhima, "O unblemished one! What do you wish to do?" Bhima then told him about Dharmaraja's wish and that lord of men acted accordingly.[33] O king! Bhima spent thirty nights there as Shishupala's guest. After that, he left with his army and his mounts.'

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Vaishampayana said, 'Then that destroyer of enemies vanquished Kumara Shrenimana and Brihadbala, the lord of Koshala. In Ayodhya, the best of the Pandavas defeated, without having to perform very terrible deeds, the righteous and extremely strong Dirghaprajna. The lord then subjugated the land of Gopalakaccha, the northern Sottamas and the king who was the lord of the Mallas. Along the slopes of the Himalayas, the powerful one then ran into Jaradgava and in a short while, brought the entire country under his power. The bull among men defeated many countries in this fashion and conquered Unnata and the mountains of Kukshimanta. Pandava, great in valour and supreme among those who are strong, defeated in battle Subandhu, the king of Kashi, one who never retreated from battle. The mighty-armed Bhima, terrible in deeds and bull among the Pandavas, used his power to conquer Kratha, lord of the kings in the region of Suparshva, in battle. Then he conquered the immensely energetic Matsyas, the immensely strong Malayas, the invincible Gayas and all the lands with animals everywhere.[34] The mighty-armed one repulsed Mardavika and Mahidhara and having marched towards the north, conquered the foothills. The strong Kounteya used his strength to defeat the land of the Vatsas, the lord of the Bhargas, the lord of the Nishadas and many other owners of the land, led by Manimana. Pandava Bhima then conquered the southern Mallas and Bhogavanta, without having to expend terrible effort. The lord, tiger among men, used conciliation, without the need for terrible deeds, to win over the Sharmakas and the Varmakasa and

King Janaka of Videha, the lord of the earth. Spending time in Videha, Kounteya Pandava defeated the seven lords of the kiratas in the region around Mount Indra.

'After that, the valorous Kounteya defeated the Suhmas and the eastern Suhmas in battle[35] and marched on towards Magadha. Defeating Danda and Dandadhara and many kings, he attacked Girivraja, with all of them on his side. O king! Having subjugated Jarasandha's son and extracted tribute from him, the powerful one marched with all of them against Karna.[36] The earth trembled with his fourfold army. The best of the Pandavas fought with Karna, the destroyer of enemies. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! He vanquished Karna in battle and brought him under his sway. He then defeated the powerful kings who lived in the mountains. Later, in a great battle, using only the strength of his arms,[37] Pandava defeated the immensely strong Modagiri. O king! He then defeated the immensely strong and brave Vasudeva, the king of Poundra and the immensely energetic king who dwelt in the marshes along the Koushiki.[38] Both these warriors were terrible in valour and were surrounded by large armies. O great king! He then attacked the king of Vanga.[39] He vanquished Samudrasena and King Chandrasena, the king of Tamralipta[40] and Kacha, the ruler of Vanga. The bull among the Bharata lineage conquered the ruler of the Suhmas, all those who lived along the ocean and all the mlecchas.

'Having thus conquered many countries and extracting riches from them, Pavana's powerful son[41] then reached the Louhitya.[42] He extracted tributes and riches of all kinds from all the kings of the mlecchas who lived in islands in the ocean—sandalwood, aloe, garments, the best of gems and pearls, gold, silver, diamonds and priceless coral. They showered the Pandava,[43] whose spirit was boundless, with great riches that amounted to hundreds of millions.[44] Returning to Indraprastha, Bhima, terrible in valour, tendered all those riches to Dharmaraja.'

Vaishampayana said, ‘In similar fashion, after worshipping Dharmaraja, Sahadeva left for the south with a large army. The lord first conquered the entire land of the Shurasenas.[45] The descendant of the Kuru lineage, supreme among powerful ones, then subjugated the king of Matsya.[46] In a great battle, he defeated Dantavakra, emperor among kings. Having forced him to pay tribute, he restored the throne to him. He then vanquished Sukumara and King Sumitra and conquered the other Matsyas and the Patachcharas. The illustrious one swiftly conquered the country of the nishadas and Goshringa, supreme among mountains. Then he defeated King Shrenimana. After conquering the new country, he marched against Kuntibhoja and he[47] happily accepted the suzerainty.[48] On the banks of the Charmanvati[49] he encountered King Jambaka’s son,[50] who had earlier been defeated by Vasudeva because of an earlier enmity. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! He instantly engaged in a battle with Bhoja and having defeated him, marched towards the south.

‘Having extracted tribute and many riches from them,[51] he took all these and advanced towards the Narmada. The powerful and valorous son of the Ashvins defeated in battle Vinda and Anuvinda from Avanti,[52] who were surrounded by large armies. Having extracted riches from them, he advanced towards the city of Mahishmati.[53] The powerful Pandava Sahadeva, bull among men, engaged in battle King Nila there. The great battle struck terror in the hearts of the fearful. It destroyed armies and threatened life. The illustrious god of fire provided succour to his enemy. Horses, chariots, elephants, soldiers and armour from Sahadeva’s army were seen to be blazing. The mind of the descendant of the Kuru lineage was bewildered. O Janamejaya! He was incapable of giving a fitting reply.’

Janamejaya asked, ‘Why did the illustrious Agni become Sahadeva’s adversary in war? O brahmana! He was seeking to accomplish a sacrifice.’

Vaishampayana replied, ‘It is said that the illustrious god of fire lived in Mahishmati and was once caught in an act of adultery. In earlier times, after he had sported himself as he willed in the disguise of a brahmana, he

was brought before King Nila.[54] The virtuous king ordered him to be punished in accordance with the sacred texts and the illustrious fire-god blazed up in anger. On seeing this, the king was surprised and bowed his head before the wise one.[55] At this, the illustrious fire-god bestowed his favours on the king. The one who achieves the end of all sacrifices offered a boon to the king and the lord of the earth asked for the boon that his forces might always be free from fear. O king! Ever since then, whenever ignorant kings have tried to conquer that city, they have been consumed instantly by the fire. O extender of the Kuru lineage! From that day, the women from the city of Mahishmati became unacceptable.[56] Because of Agni's boon, the women could no longer be restricted.[57] They are their own mistresses[58] and act as they will. O supreme among men! O great king! From that day, out of fear of Agni, all kings have avoided that kingdom.

'O king! The virtuous Sahadeva saw that his soldiers were engulfed in fear and surrounded by the fire, they trembled like a mountain. He touched water and made himself pure and then spoke to Pavaka.[59] "O Pavaka! O one with the black trails! I worship you and it is for your sake that I have undertaken this task. You are the mouth of the gods. You are the sacrifice. You purify and you are the purifier. You are the bearer of sacrificial offerings. It is from you that the Vedas have come into being and thus it is that you are known as Jataveda. O bearer of sacrificial offerings! Please do not cause an obstruction to this sacrifice." Having uttered these words, Madri's son spread kusha grass on the ground. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! In accordance with the prescribed rituals, that tiger among men sat down before the advancing fire, before all his frightened and anxious troops. Like the great ocean which does not cross the shoreline, the fire did not cross him. The fire approached Sahadeva, god among men and descendant of the Kuru lineage, and spoke to him in affectionate words, "O descendant of the Kuru lineage! Arise. I acted thus only to test you. I know all your intentions and those of Dharma's son.[60] O supreme among

the Bharata lineage! However, I am bound to protect this city, as long as there are heirs to carry forward King Nila's lineage. O Pandava! However, I will accomplish what you desire in your heart." Then Madri's son arose with a happy heart. Bowing his head and joining his hands in salutation, the bull among men worshipped Pavaka. When Pavaka retreated, King Nila arrived and welcomed Sahadava, tiger among men and lord of all warriors. He[61] accepted the homage and made him a tributary. Then Madri's victorious son advanced in a southern direction.

'He vanquished the immensely energetic Traipuras.[62] The mighty-armed one conquered the lord of Potana. With a great deal of effort, the mighty-armed one then subjugated Ahriti, king of Surashtra,[63] whose preceptor was Koushika. While in the region of Surashtra, the intelligent one sent an ambassador to King Rukmin Bhishmaka of Bhojakata, who had great standing, was devoted to dharma and was a friend of Indra himself. O king! For the sake of Vasudeva,[64] the mighty-armed king and his sons happily accepted the suzerainty.

'Taking a lot of riches, the lord of war went from there to Shurparaka and the region named Upakrita, ruled by a clan. The immensely energetic and immensely strong one conquered them and the region of Dandaka.[65] The immensely wise one conquered and brought under his sway the kings who are born from mlecchа wombs and live in islands in the ocean, the man-eating nishadas, the Karnapravaranas, those known as the Kalamukhas and who are a cross between men and rakshasas, all of the Kolla mountains, Murachipattana, the island known as Tamra, Mount Ramaka and King Timingila. He used messengers to subjugate and obtain tribute from the forest-dwelling men who had only one leg[66] and the cities of Samjayanti, Picchanda and Karahataka. Likewise, he used messengers to subjugate and obtain tribute from the Pandya, the Dravidas, the Chodras,[67] the Keralas, the Andhras, the Talavanas, the Kalingas, the Ushtrakarnikas, the Antakhis,[68] the Romas[69] and the city of the Greeks.[70] O lord of kings! Madri's intelligent son then went to

Bharukaccha.[71] He sent envoys to the great-souled Poulastya Vibhishana.[72] The conqueror of enemies and one with dharma in his heart[73] used conciliation and knowing this to be determined by destiny, the intelligent lord[74] happily accepted the suzerainty and sent many kinds of riches—firstly sandalwood and aloe, and then divine ornaments, expensive garments and priceless jewels.

'Then the powerful and intelligent Sahadeva returned. He thus subjugated with conciliation and conquest. After making the kings pay tribute, the conqueror of enemies returned. O king! O Janamejaya! O bull among the Bharata lineage! He handed all of this over to Dharmaraja and having accomplished his task, lived happily there.'

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Vaishampayana said, 'I will now describe the deeds and conquests of Nakula and how that lord vanquished the region that had once been conquered by Vasudeva.[75] Taking a large army with him, the intelligent one left Khandavaprastha and headed towards the west. The earth trembled with the lion-like roars of his warriors and sounds made by the edges of his chariot wheels.

'He first marched on the prosperous and beautiful Rohitaka, beloved of Kartikeya. It was rich in cattle, horses, wealth and grain. There was a great battle there with the Mattamayuraka warriors. The immensely radiant one then conquered the desert region, the land known as Sairishaka that was rich in grain, Mahecchа, the Shibis, the Trigartas, the Ambashthas, the Malavas, the five groups of Karpatas and the brahmanas known as Madhyamikaya and Vatadhana. Having circled again, that bull among men defeated the clans known as Utsavasamketa who dwelt in the forests of Pushkara, the immensely powerful Gramaneyas who lived on the banks of the Sindhu,[76] the clans of shudras and *abhira*s[77] who lived along the Sarasvati,[78] all those who live on fish and all those who live in the mountains, the land of the five rivers, the western Paryatas, the northern

Jyotika, the city named Vrindataka and Dvarapala. The immensely radiant one defeated them all and the Harhunas and all the kings who dwelt to the west.

'Having brought all this under his rule, the Pandava[79] sent messengers to Vasudeva and he[80] and his ten kingdoms accepted his[81] rule. Then he marched to Shakala, the city of the Madras. Using conciliation, the powerful one made an ally of his maternal uncle Shalya.[82] O lord of the earth! The king honoured him, as was due to a deserving guest. The lord of warriors took a large quantity of riches and departed. He then defeated the extremely fearful mlecchas who lived along the sides of the ocean, the Pahlavas and the Barbaras.[83] Having conquered all these kings and extracted tribute, Nakula, supreme among men, returned. O great king! Such were the riches collected by the great-souled one that ten thousand camels carried it with difficulty. In Indraprastha, Madri's brave and fortunate son went to Yudhishthira and offered the riches to him. Thus did Nakula, bull among the Bharata lineage, conquer the western regions, protected by Varuna and conquered earlier by Vasudeva.'[84]

Section Twenty-Four

Rajasuya Parva

This section has ninety-seven shlokas and three chapters.

Chapter 255(30): 54 shlokas
Chapter 256(31): 25 shlokas
Chapter 257(32): 18 shlokas

This section is about the rajasuya or royal sacrifice.

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Vaishampayana said, ‘Protected by Dharmaraja and supported by truth, with all the enemies subjugated, the subjects were always engaged in their respective tasks. Because revenue was collected in the right way and rule was in accordance with the principles of dharma, the clouds poured forth the desired rain and the country was swollen in prosperity. Because of the king’s deeds, everything prospered, especially the breeding of cattle, agriculture and trade. O king! Dacoits and thieves, and even the king’s servants, were not heard to speak lies to each other. Yudhishthira was always devoted to dharma and during his reign, there never were droughts, too much of rain, disease, fires or loss in consciousness. Other kings only came to him for pleasant tasks, to show respect and offer tribute out of their own volition, and not for any other reason. The accumulation of riches acquired through dharma became so large that it would have been impossible to spend it in hundreds of years. Having ascertained the size of

his granary and treasury, King Kounteya,[1] lord of the earth, mentally decided to perform the sacrifice.

'Separately and collectively, his well-wishers told him, "O lord! It is time for the sacrifice. Do what is necessary to perform it." While they were speaking in this way, Hari[2] arrived—the ancient rishi, the soul of the Vedas, visible only to those who know him, supreme among all established things, the origin and dissolution of the universe, the preserver of what was, is and will be, Keshava, the destroyer of Keshi,[3] the protecting wall of all the Vrishnis and the one who provides sanctuary in times of distress. Having placed Anakadundubhi in charge of his forces and taking a great deal of riches for Dharmaraja, Madhava, tiger among men, arrived with a large army. He entered that supreme city to the sound of chariots, his wealth adding to the inexhaustible ocean of riches that were already there. With Krishna's arrival, the city of the Bharatas rejoiced, like a place without a sun when the sun arrives, or a place without the wind when the wind arrives. Yudhishthira delightedly met him and offered him homage in accordance with the prescribed rites.

'When they had asked about each other's welfare and he[4] was happily seated, that bull among men[5] told Krishna, in the presence of Dhoumya and Dvaipayana at the forefront of the officiating priests, Bhima, Arjuna and the twins. "O Krishna! It is because of you that the entire earth is under my rule. O Varshneya! It is through your favours that I have obtained great riches. O Madhava! O son of Devaki! As is prescribed, I now wish to devote all this to the welfare of brahmanas and the sacrificial fire. O mighty-armed Dasharha![6] With my younger brothers as companions, please grant me permission for you to be instated in the sacrifice. O mighty-armed one! O Govinda! O Dasharha! When you have been instated in the sacrifice, I will become free from sin. O lord! O Krishna! Otherwise, grant me, and my younger brothers, permission to undertake this sacrifice. For, with your permission, I will be able to perform that supreme sacrifice." After greatly praising his[7] many

qualities, Krishna replied, “O tiger among kings! You are a universal emperor and can perform the great sacrifice. When you have performed the sacrifice and obtained its fruits, we will accomplish what we desire. Perform the sacrifice you wish. I am always established in your welfare. Appoint me in whatever office you want. I will act in accordance with all your words.” Yudhishthira said, “O Krishna! O Hrishikesha! When you are willingly present here, it is certain that my resolution will be achieved and my success is assured.” Having thus obtained Krishna’s permission, Pandava[8] and his brothers began to prepare the means for the rajasuya.

‘Pandava,[9] destroyer of his enemies, instructed Sahadeva, supreme among warriors, and all his advisers, “The brahmanas prescribe articles for this sacrificial ceremony. Let those be collected along with all the utensils and auspicious objects. Let the ingredients Dhoumya mentions be swiftly brought. In due order, as is required, let the men bring them. In their desire to do that which pleases me, let Indrasena,[10] Vishoka[11] and Arjuna’s charioteer Puru be employed to acquire the required food. O supreme among the Kuru lineage![12] Let every object of desire be brought, fragrant and succulent, so that the minds of brahmanas are delighted and pleased.” As soon as these words were uttered by the great-souled Dharmaraja, Sahadeva, supreme among warriors, announced that it had all been done.

‘O king! Dvaipayana then appointed the officiating priests.[13] They were immensely illustrious brahmanas, who seemed to be personifications of the Vedas themselves. Satyavati’s son[14] himself acted as the brahman. Susama, bull among the Dhananjayas, became the chanter of Sama.[15] Yajnavalka, supreme among those who are established in the brahman, became the chief adhvaryu. Vasu’s son Paila, aided by Dhoumya, became the hotar. O bull among the Bharata lineage! The groups of sons and disciples of these, all learned in the Vedas and the Vedangas, became assistants to the hotars. Having invoked the auspicious day and arranging everything according to the rites, they organized the great sacrifice for the

gods, in accordance with what is laid down in the sacred texts. Given specific instructions, artisans built large shelters that were filled with jewels and were like the mansions of the gods.

'Then that king, supreme among kings and supreme among the Kuru lineage,[16] instructed his adviser Sahadeva, "Quickly send swift messengers with invitations." Hearing the king's words, he[17] immediately sent messengers. "Invite to the kingdom all the brahmanas and all the owners of land, all the vaishyas and all the respected shudras. Bring them all here." On the Pandava's instructions, invitations were sent to all the lords of the earth and more messengers were sent with invitations.

'O descendant of the Bharata lineage! When the time was right, the brahmanas instated Kunti's son Yudhishthira in the rajasuya. O Indra among men! When Dharmaraja Yudhishthira, always devoted to dharma, was instated, he went to the sacrificial ground, surrounded by thousands of brahmanas, his brothers, his relatives, his well-wishers, his advisers and kshatriyas who had arrived from many countries. Accompanied by his ministers, that best of kings was like dharma personified. Brahmanas arrived from different directions. They were learned in all the branches of knowledge, the Vedas and the Vedangas. On Dharmaraja's instructions, thousands of artisans constructed separate dwelling places for them and their companions. These had all the qualities and were stocked with food and garments. O king! Shown due favours, the brahmanas lived there, recounting many tales and watching the actors and dancers. A great and unending sound was heard as those great-souled brahmanas cheerfully ate and spoke. "Give, give!" "Eat, eat!" Such were the sounds that were always heard. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Dharmaraja separately gave hundreds and thousands of cattle, beds, gold and women. Thus did the sacrifice of the great-souled Pandava begin, the unmatched warrior on earth, as Shakra is in the world of the gods. O bull among the Bharata lineage! Then King Yudhishthira sent Pandava Nakula to Hastinapura, to bring Bhishma, Drona, Dhritarashtra, Vidura, Kripa and all the brothers who were attached to Yudhishthira.'

Vaishampayana said, ‘The victorious Nakula went to Hastinapura and the Pandava[18] invited Bhishma and Dhritarashtra. Having heard of Dharmaraja’s sacrifice and learned about sacrifices, they happily set out, with the brahmanas at the forefront. O bull among men! Others also came in hundreds, content in their hearts and desiring to see Pandava Dharmaraja’s sabha. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! All the kings arrived from all the directions. They brought with them many expensive jewels.

‘O descendant of the Bharata lineage! All of them were welcomed with honour—Dhritarashtra, Bhishma, the greatly intelligent Vidura, all the brothers with Duryodhana at the forefront, all the kings with the preceptor[19] at the forefront, Subala the king of Gandhara, the immensely strong Shakuni, Achala, Vrishaka, the supreme warrior Karna, Rita, Shalya the king of the Madras, the maharatha Bahlika, Somadatta of the Kuru lineage, Bhuri, Bhurishrava, Shala, Ashvatthama, Kripa, Drona,[20] Jayadratha the king of Sindhu, Yajnasena[21] and his son, Shalva the lord of the earth, the greatly famous Bhagadatta, king of Pragjyotisha, all the mlecchas who lived along the shores of the ocean, the kings from the mountains, King Brihadbala, Vasudeva from Pundra, the king of Vanga, the king of Kalinga, Akarsha, Kuntala, the Vanavasya, the Andhrakas, the Dravidas, the Simhalas, the king of Kashmir, the immensely energetic Kuntibhoja, the immensely strong Suhma, all the other kings and warriors from Bahlika, Virata and his sons, the maharatha Machella, kings, the sons of kings, the lords of many countries, the immensely valorous Shishupala, invincible in battle, and his son, Rama,[22] Aniruddha, Babhru, Sarana, Gada, Pradyumna, Samba, the valorous Charudeshna, Ulmuka, Nishatha, Pradyumna’s valorous son and all the other Vrishnis who were maharathas. They all went to the Pandava’s sacrifice. Many other kings from the middle regions also went to the great rajasuya sacrifice of Pandu’s son.

‘O king! On Dharmaraja’s instructions, dwelling houses were provided to all of them. They had many rooms and were adorned with lakes and

trees. There, Dharma's son showed them the best of honours. Having been shown due homage, all the kings went to their assigned dwelling houses—as tall as the peaks of Kailasa, beautiful, stocked with every kind of object and surrounded by strongly built and white walls on every side. There were nets of gold and the floors were paved with precious stones. The stairs were gentle to climb and there were expensive seats and carpets. They were decorated with wreaths and garlands and perfumed with the best of aloe. They were white like a swan's feathers and could be seen from the distance of a yojana. The doors were wide, permitting easy entry and were characterized by every quality. They were constructed out of many metals and looked like the peaks of the Himalayas.

'After resting there for some time, those lords saw Dharmaraja Yudhishthira, surrounded by many *sadasya*s[23] and donating innumerable gifts. O king! Crowded by sadasyas, kings and great-souled brahmanas, the place looked as beautiful as the vault of the sky,[24] crowded with immortals.'

257(32)

Vaishampayana said, 'Having shown homage to his grandfather[25] and preceptor[26] and having welcomed them, Yudhishthira spoke these words to Bhishma, Drona, Kripa, Drona's son[27] and Vivimshati.[28] "All of you must show me every favour at this sacrifice. All my great riches here are yours. Be kind towards me, without any constraints, and as you desire." The eldest of the Pandavas had already been instated in the sacrifice. Having thus spoken, he immediately appointed each with a suitable office in the sacrifice. Duhshasana was put in charge of food and other objects of pleasure. Ashvatthama was appointed to the task of tending to the brahmanas. Sanjaya was appointed to the task of welcoming the kings. The immensely wise Bhishma and Drona were in charge of what should be done and what should not be done. The king gave Kripa the task of looking

after the gold, gold coins and jewels and also the distribution of dakshina. Similarly, he appointed other tigers among men to other tasks.

'Having been brought there by Nakula, the guests Bahlika, Dhritarashtra, Somadatta and Jayadratha enjoyed themselves, as if they were the masters. Kshatta[29] Vidura, knowledgeable in every aspect of dharma, was in charge of the treasury. Duryodhana received all the tribute that was brought. All the worlds assembled there, wishing to see Dharmaraja Pandava's sabha and participate in the supreme fruits. No one came there with a tribute that was less than one thousand.[30] Everyone made Dharmaraja prosper with many jewels. The kings rivalled each other and, donating riches, proudly said, "Let the Kouravya attain the sacrifice with my riches alone." O king! The sacrificial grounds of the great-souled Kounteya were resplendent with dwelling houses which had chariots in front, guards, soldiers, chariots of the lords of the earth,[31] brahmana dwelling houses, mansions constructed like divine chariots and decorated with many colourful jewels, the assembled kings, wealth and prosperity. Yudhishthira seemed to rival the god Varuna in riches. The sacrifice had six fires and large amounts of dakshina. Everyone was satisfied with every object of desire—abundance of grain and plenty of food. It was crowded by well-fed people. A large amount of gifts of jewels were brought to the assembly. Those skilled in the knowledge of mantras offered libations, clarified butter and oblations at the sacrifice and gratified the gods and the maharshis. Like the gods, the brahmanas were also gratified with gifts, food and great wealth. All the varnas were delighted at the sacrifice.'

Section Twenty-Five

Arghabhiharana Parva

This section has ninety-nine shlokas and four chapters.

Chapter 258(33): 32 shlokas
Chapter 259(34): 23 shlokas
Chapter 260(35): 29 shlokas
Chapter 261(36): 15 shlokas

Argha *(or arghya) is an offering made as a sign of veneration.* Abhiharana *is the act of fetching or taking. So* arghabhiharana parva *is about the offering of a gift, as a sign of respect, and the consequent dispute.*

258(33)

Vaishampayana said, 'At the time of the sprinkling of water,[1] all the brahmanas and kings entered the inside of the sacrificial enclosure. The maharshis, with the great-souled Narada at the forefront, seated themselves at the altar. With the rajarshis, they were as radiant as the gods and the devarshis in Brahma's abode. Those immensely energetic ones performed one rite after another and discussed it among themselves, "This is the right way," "that is not the right way," "there is no other way except this," thus did they speak a lot and argue with each other. Some made weak arguments appear strong. Others cited the sacred texts to make strong arguments appear weak. Some intelligent debaters tore apart the arguments of others, the way hawks fall upon raw pieces of meat thrown in the air. Some among them were great in their vows and knew the stories about dharma and artha. Others were supreme among those who had

knowledge of the Vedas. Others found delight in recounting tales. The sacrificial altar was surrounded by gods, brahmanas and maharshis, all with knowledge of the Vedas, and looked as beautiful as the clear sky with its stars. O king! No shudra, or one without any vows, was near the inner altar of Yudhishthira's abode.

'On seeing the prosperity of the prosperous and intelligent Dharmaraja, all the consequences of that sacrifice, Narada became satisfied. O lord of men! On seeing the assembly of all the kshatriyas, the sage Narada began to think. O bull among the Bharata lineage! He remembered the ancient account about the partial incarnations that he had heard in Brahma's abode. O descendant of the Kuru lineage! Knowing that this was an assembly of gods, Narada remembered Pundarikaksha Hari.[2] The lord Narayana, slayer of enemies of the wise ones[3] and destroyer of cities of the enemies, had himself been born as a kshatriya to keep his pledge. In ancient times, the creator of beings had himself commanded the gods, "You will regain your own worlds after you have killed one another." Having thus instructed all the gods, Shambhu[4] Narayana, the illustrious lord of the universe, was himself born in Yadu's dynasty. Having been born in the lineage of the Andhakas and the Vrishnis, the supreme one among those who extend lineages, shone with supreme prosperity, like the moon among the stars. Hari's strength of arms was worshipped by Indra, with all the gods. He is the destroyer of enemies and had been born in human form. "Oh! What can be a greater wonder than this? The self-creator will himself take away all these great and strong kshatriyas." These were the thoughts of the righteous Narada. He knew that Hari Narayana is the god who is worshipped through sacrifices. The intelligent one, supreme among those who know dharma, remained at the great sacrifice of the supremely intelligent Dharmaraja, so as to greatly honour him.

'O king! O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Bhishma then spoke to King Dharmaraja Yudhishthira. "Let offerings be made to the kings, according to what they deserve. O Yudhishthira! It is said that one's preceptor, one's priest, one's relative, a snataka, a friend and a king—these

are the six who are deserving of such offerings. It is also said that when someone comes and stays for more than one year, he too becomes deserving. These kings have stayed with us for a very long time. O king! Therefore, let an arghya be brought for each of them. Let the first arghya be brought for he who is the most deserving among them." Yudhishthira asked, "O grandfather! O descendant of the Kuru lineage! Whom do you consider to be the one to whom the first arghya should be presented? Please tell me what is right." O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Through his intelligence, Shantanu's son Bhishma then determined that Varshneya Krishna was the most deserving person on earth. "Among all these assembled here, he is the one who blazes with his energy, strength and valour, like the sun shines among the stars. This sacrificial place is lit up and gladdened by Krishna, like a sunless place with the sun and a windless place with the wind." Having been thus instructed by Bhishma, the powerful Sahadeva offered the supreme arghya to Varshneya, in accordance with the rites prescribed. Krishna accepted it, in accordance with the rites laid down in the sacred texts. However, Shishupala could not tolerate this homage shown to Vasudeva. In that assembly, the immensely powerful king of Chedi censured Bhishma and Dharmaraja and then insulted Vasudeva.'

259(34)

'Shishupala said, "O descendant of the Kuru lineage![5] When so many great-souled lords of the earth are present here, Varshneya does not deserve to be worshipped, as if he were a king. O Pandava! This honour shown to Pundarikaksha is not deserving of the great-souled Pandavas. O Pandavas! You are children and do not know the subtleties of dharma. This son of the river[6] can see little and has transgressed what is proper. Though he knows what is dharma, Bhishma acts like you out of favouritism and is worthy of censure in the world of honest ones. This man from Dasharha is not even a king. You have shown him homage. How does he deserve to be honoured foremost among all these kings? O bull among the Bharata

lineage! You cannot consider Krishna to be the eldest when the aged Vasudeva[7] is here? How can the son he shown homage first? Or you may consider Vasudeva to be one who always does that which ensures your welfare. But then, when Drupada is here, how can Madhava be thus worshipped? O chief among those of the Kuru lineage! If you consider Krishna to be your preceptor, how can Varshneya be shown homage when Drona is here? O descendant of the Kuru lineage! If you consider Krishna to be the sacrificial priest, how can you show him homage when the brahmana Dvaipayana is present? O supreme among those of the Kuru lineage! Madhusudana is not a sacrificial priest, or a preceptor, or a king. Why have you shown him homage except out of favouritism? O descendant of the Bharata lineage! If you must worship Madhusudana, why did you bring these kings here, so as to insult them?

‘“We did not offer tribute to the great-souled Kounteya out of fear, or out of avarice, or as a result of conciliation. We offered him tribute because he wished to become an emperor, in accordance with the dictates of dharma. Yet he now pays no attention to us. Krishna has not attained any signs of royalty, yet he is offered homage in the midst of this assembly of kings. This is nothing but an insult. The fame of Dharma’s son, as someone who has dharma in his heart, has vanished. Who can offer deserving homage in this way to one who has deviated from dharma? Born in the lineage of the Vrishnis, he earlier slew a king.[8] Today, the devotion to dharma has deserted Yudhishthira. His meanness is evident from his offering the arghya to Krishna. O Madhava! If the Kounteyas are scared and if they have become mean as a consequence of their asceticism, surely you could have enlightened them about what kind of honour you deserve. O Janardana! If in their meanness they offered you a homage that you are not worthy of, why did you accept it? Though undeserving, you set great store on this homage, like a dog that has found an offering of sacrificial ghee and consumes it in private. O Janardana! This is not only an insult to the Indras among kings. The Kurus have also brought out your true nature. O Madhusudana! You are not a king and this royal homage to you is like a

wife to the impotent or a beautiful sight to the blind. We have seen what King Yudhishthira is and we have seen what Bhishma is. We have seen what Vasudeva is. We have seen everything exactly as it is."

'With these words, Shishupala arose from his supreme seat and went out from the assembly, together with all the other kings.'[9]

260(35)

Vaishampayana said, 'Then King Yudhishthira rushed after Shishupala and spoke to him in these sweet and conciliatory words. "O lord of the earth! The words that you have spoken are not appropriate. O king! They are in violation of dharma, they are cruel and serve no purpose. O lord of the earth! Shantanu's son Bhishma will never err in supreme dharma and do not insult him in vain. Look at these many lords of the earth, older than you. They accepted the homage shown to Krishna and you should also accept it. O lord of Chedi, Bhishma knows Krishna's true nature and you yourself do not know it as well as the Kouravya[10] does."

'Bhishma said, "Krishna is the oldest in the worlds. He who does not accept the homage shown to him, deserves neither kind words, nor conciliation. A kshatriya who is supreme among warriors and having defeated a kshatriya in battle, sets him free from captivity, becomes his preceptor. In this assembly of kings, I do not see a lord of the earth who has not been defeated in battle through Satvata's[11] energy. Not only is Achyuta supremely deserving of this homage, he deserves to be worshipped by all the three worlds. Many bulls among kshatriyas have been defeated by Krishna in battle. The entire universe and everything are established in Varshneya. Therefore, though there are elders here, we show homage to Krishna and no one else. You should not speak as you did. Your thoughts should not be of that kind. O king! I have attended upon many who are old in knowledge. When they recounted in their assemblies the qualities of Shouri, blessed with all the qualities, I have heard of those many qualities that are greatly revered by the honest. Many are the times when I have heard people talk about the deeds that this intelligent one has

performed since birth. O king of Chedi! We have not worshipped Janardana out of caprice. Nor have we shown him homage because of our special relationship with him or because we expect anything from him. He is the source of all happiness on earth, all the honest of the earth honour him. We offered him the homage because we knew of his fame, valour and victories. There is no one here, however young, who has not been examined. Passing over many who possess qualities and age, we chose Hari as the most deserving of honour. He is the oldest among brahmanas in knowledge and among kshatriyas, he is the greatest in strength. Both these are firm grounds for Govinda to be worshipped. He is learned in the Vedas and Vedangas and has infinite strength. Is there anyone else in the world of men who is as distinguished as Keshava? In Achyuta can always be found generosity, dexterity, learning, valour, modesty, deeds, supreme intelligence, humility, beauty, steadfastness, satisfaction and prosperity. Therefore, he has every quality. He is the teacher, father and preceptor. He is fit to be honoured and worthy of worship. Hrishikesha is the officiating priest, the preceptor, the bridegroom,[12] the snataka, the king and the friend. Therefore, Achyuta has been shown the homage. The worlds owe their origin to Krishna and in him are they dissolved. It is in Krishna that all the beings of this universe are established. He is passive nature, he is the active doer and he is eternal. He is supreme among all beings and it is for this reason that Achyuta is the eldest. Intelligence, mind, greatness, wind, energy, water, sky, earth and the four kinds of beings[13]—are all established in Krishna. The sun, the moon, the stars, the planets, the directions and the intermediate directions—are all established in Krishna. Since he does not know that Krishna is always everywhere, this Shishupala is only a child[14] and utters these words. It is only the intelligent man who can see the best of dharma and can act according to dharma, not this king of Chedi. Who among these great-souled lords of the earth, young or old, does not consider Krishna to be worthy of worship? Who does not show him homage? If Shishupala considers that this homage was undeserving, let him act as he sees fit, for this undeserving honour."'

Vaishampayana said, ‘Having said this, the immensely famous Bhishma became quiet. Then Sahadeva uttered these words of great import. “If there are any kings here who cannot tolerate the homage I have shown to Keshava Krishna, of immeasurable valour and the slayer of Keshi,[15] I place my foot on the heads of those strong ones. As I utter these words, let him give a fitting reply. Let the intelligent kings accept that he is the teacher, the father and the preceptor, one who is shown homage, who should be shown homage and who is deserving of homage.” When he displayed his foot, not one among those intelligent, wise, proud and powerful kings replied. At that, a shower of flowers rained down on Sahadeva’s head. An invisible voice exclaimed, “Excellent! Excellent!” Attired in black antelope skin, Narada, the foreteller of both the past and the future, the dispeller of all doubts and the knower of all the worlds, approved.

‘All the masses[16] who had been invited there, with Sunitha[17] at the forefront, seemed to be angry and their faces paled. The kings spoke of Yudhishthira’s instatement and the homage offered to Vasudeva. They were disgusted and decided they had deserved it. Though they were restrained by well-wishers, their forms were angry and they looked like roaring lions that were dragged away from raw meat. Krishna understood that this ocean of kings, surrounded by waves of soldiers, was getting ready to do battle. Sahadeva, god among men, completed the ceremony, worshipping especially the brahmanas and the kshatriyas who deserved such homage. When Krishna had been shown homage, Sunitha, the one who dragged his enemies, spoke to the lords of men. He was angry and his eyes were extremely copper-red. “Do you think that I am still the general of your army? Do we stand here ready to fight the assembled Vrishnis and Pandavas?” When he had thus inspired all the kings, the bull among the Chedis consulted with the kings about disrupting the sacrifice.’

Section Twenty-Six

Shishupala-vadha Parva

This section has 191 shlokas and six chapters.

Chapter 262(37): 15 shlokas
Chapter 263(38): 40 shlokas
Chapter 264(39): 20 shlokas
Chapter 265(40): 23 shlokas
Chapter 266(41): 33 shlokas
Chapter 267(42): 60 shlokas

Since vadha means killing this section is about the killing of Shishupala.

262(37)

Vaishampayana said, ‘On seeing that ocean of kings angrily agitated like the sea, Yudhisthira spoke to the old Bhishma, best among those who are intelligent and the grandfather of the Kurus. It was like the greatly energetic Puruhuta[1] speaking to Brihaspati. “This great ocean of kings is agitated with anger. O grandfather! Tell me what I should do now. O grandfather! Tell me now, in detail and completely, what I must do to prevent an obstruction to the sacrifice, so that the welfare of the subjects is ensured.” When Dharmaraja Yudhishthira, knowledgeable in dharma, uttered these words, Bhishma, the grandfather of the Kurus, thus spoke to him, “O tiger among the Kuru lineage! Do not be frightened. Can a dog kill a lion? I have already chosen a path that is auspicious and in conformity with good policy. All these rulers of the earth bark like a pack of dogs around a sleeping lion. O son! Like dogs angrily barking before a

lion, they stand before the sleeping lion of the Vrishni lineage. As long as the lion Achyuta is asleep, this bull among Chedis and like a lion himself, makes those others seem like lions. O best of kings! O son! Shishupala has limited sense. Through he who is the soul of everything,[2] he desires to take all these kings to Yama's abode. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! It is certain that Adhokshaja[3] will take away Shishupala's energy. O Kounteya! O supreme among intelligent ones! You will be fortunate. The intelligence of the king of Chedi, and that of all these kings, has gone astray. Whomever that tiger among men[4] wishes to take, his intelligence goes as astray as that of the king of Chedi. O Yudhisthira! Madhava is the creator and the destroyer of the four kinds of beings that exist in the three worlds." O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Having heard these words, the king of Chedi replied to Bhishma in a harsh tone.'

263(38)

'Shishupala said, "You are old and you defile your lineage. You try to frighten all these kings with your threats. Are you not ashamed? You are supreme among all the Kurus. But since you live in the third state,[5] it is but appropriate that you should offer advice that runs counter to dharma. O Bhishma! With you at the forefront, it is but natural that the Kouravas should be like a boat tied to a boat, or like a blind man following the blind. You have once again injured our minds by specially recounting this one's deeds, such as the killing of Putana[6] and so on. O Bhishma! You are arrogant and stupid. If you wish to praise Keshava, why does your tongue not splinter into a hundred parts? O Bhishma! You are supposed to be old in wisdom. Yet you wish to praise a cowherd. His evil repute is recounted by even those who are like children among men.[7] O Bhishma! If he killed a vulture[8] when he was a child, what is extraordinary? Ashva and Vrishabha[9] weren't skilled in the art of war. O Bhishma! What is extraordinary if he kicked down an inanimate wooden cart with his foot?

[10] O Bhishma! It is my view that there was nothing remarkable in holding up Govardhana mountain for a week.[11] It was nothing but an anthill. O Bhishma! When we hear from you that he ate great quantities of food while sporting on a mountain top, we are astonished even more. You are knowledgeable in dharma. What can be more extraordinary than killing the greatly strong Kamsa, whose food he had partaken? O Bhishma! O wretch of the Kuru lineage! You do not know dharma. I will now tell you the words of the righteous ones, since you do not seem to have heard them.

'"O Bhishma! Righteous, honest and virtuous ones have always instructed us, that in this world, one should not use weapons against women, cattle, brahmanas, those whose food has been partaken and those who seek refuge. It seems all this has been wasted on you. You speak to me about Keshava, praising him as old in wisdom, old and superior. O supreme among the Kuru lineage! Do I not know anything? O Bhishma! How does the killer of a cow,[12] and the killer of a woman,[13] deserve praise? 'He is foremost among all intelligent ones.' 'He is the lord of this universe.' Hearing these words of yours, Janardana believes them to be true. But it is certain that all this is false. Even if a raconteur sings praises many times, those praises aren't praise for the raconteur. Like *bhulinga*s[14] and vultures, every being acts according to its nature. There is no doubt that your nature is vile. The Pandavas think Krishna deserves worship. They must also be evil. You show them the path. You speak of dharma. But though you know about dharma, you have strayed from that path. O Bhishma! Which learned one, with dharma in his heart and supreme among all learned ones, will act as you have, ignoring the precepts of dharma?

'"O Bhishma! If you think you know dharma and think yourself to be wise in intelligence, why did you abduct the maiden Amba? She desired someone else. Your brother Vichitravirya followed the path indicated by the righteous ones. That king did not accept the maiden you had abducted. He is the one on whose wives others had to beget children.[15] You believe yourself to be wise. But in your sight, others fathered offspring. That is not

the path of the righteous. O Bhishma! Where is your dharma? Your brahmacharya is in vain. There is no doubt that you uphold it as a result of delusion or impotency. I do not see you as one who knows dharma. I do not see you prospering. You have not served the old,[16] or those who speak of dharma. Offerings, alms, studying and sacrifices characterized by a lot of dakshina—these are not worth a sixteenth of what is obtained through a son. O Bhishma! Whatever is obtained through many vows and fasts certainly goes in vain if one does not have a son. You do not have offspring. You are old. You utter false words in the name of dharma. Like the swan in the story, you will now be killed by your own relatives.

'"O Bhishma! Learned men in ancient times told this story. So that you can hear, I will now recount it completely. In ancient times, an old swan lived near the ocean. He always spoke of dharma and instructed the birds. But his conduct was otherwise. 'Practise dharma and avoid evil.' These were the words the birds heard from that expounder of dharma. O Bhishma! For the sake of dharma, the other birds brought him food, creatures that lived in the sea.[17] O Bhishma! Those birds also left all their eggs with him and then roamed in the waters of the sea. But the evil one ate all those eggs. That swan was always attentive to his own interests, while the others were negligent. He ate all the eggs of others. When the number of eggs declined, an extremely intelligent one[18] was suspicious and kept a watch on him. Having witnessed the swan's evil act, the bird was extremely unhappy and spoke about it to all the other birds. O descendant of the Kuru lineage! Those birds assembled. When they witnessed it themselves, they killed the untruthful swan. O Bhishma! Since your conduct is like that of the swan, these angry lords of the earth will kill you, like the birds killed the swan. O Bhishma! O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Men who know the ancient tales sing a song about this. I will repeat it for you exactly. 'O one who rides on the chariot of wings! Your act of eating the eggs contradicts your words. You will be killed in anger, because your soul shows your falsehood.'"'

‘Shishupala said, “I held in great esteem the immensely strong King Jarasandha. He did not wish to fight with this one,[19] saying that he was no more than a servant. Who will regard as praiseworthy the act of killing Jarasandha, undertaken by Keshava, together with Bhimasena and Arjuna? Entering through a way that was no gate and disguised as a brahmana, Krishna saw the influence of the wise Jarasandha. Since he knew the nature of the brahman and was himself devoted to dharma, he first offered the evil one water to wash his feet, but it was refused. O descendant of the Kuru lineage! Jarasandha invited Krishna, Bhima and Dhananjaya to partake of food, but Krishna acted in a contrary way.[20] You fool! If this one is the lord of the universe, as you think him to be, why did he not consider himself to be a brahmana? What is amazing to me is that though you make the Pandavas veer away from the path of the truth, yet they regard you as a righteous one. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Or perhaps it is not strange that you, old and like a woman, are regarded as their guide in all matters.”’

Vaishampayana said, ‘When he heard these long words, harsh and spoken harshly, the powerful Bhimasena, supreme among those who are strong, was angered. His eyes were naturally large, like lotuses. Because of anger, they became dilated and copper-red. All the kings saw him knit his brows in three furrows, like the three-coursed Ganga[21] on the three peaks of his forehead. They saw his face, teeth gnashed in anger, like destiny about to consume all beings at the end of a yuga. The strong-minded one was about to swiftly arise. But the strong-armed Bhishma restrained him, like Ishvara[22] checking Mahasena.[23] O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Bhima was soon pacified by Bhishma. The teacher calmed his anger with various words. That destroyer of enemies could not transgress Bhishma’s words, like the ocean never crosses the shoreline, even though it is swollen after the rains. O lord of men! Though Bhimasena was angry with Shishupala, that brave one[24] did not tremble and remained steadfast

in his manliness. Though that destroyer of enemies[25] kept jumping up, he[26] did not even think about him, like a lion ignoring small deer. On seeing Bhimasena, terrible in valour, thus angered, the powerful king of Chedi uttered words of jest, "O Bhishma! Let him go. Let all these lords of men watch him consumed by my power, like moths before a flame." On hearing these words of the king of Chedi, Bhishma, supreme among those of the Kuru lineage and supreme among those who are intelligent, spoke these words to Bhima.'

265(40)

'Bhishma said, "This one[27] was born in the royal lineage of Chedi with three eyes and four arms. As soon as he was born, he screamed and brayed like an ass. His father and mother, and their relatives, were struck with fear on seeing his malformed body and resolved to abandon him. The hearts of the king, his wife, his advisers and his priests were befuddled with anxiety. However, a disembodied voice spoke. 'O king! This son that has been born will be fortunate and supreme in strength. Therefore, do not be scared of him. Carefully tend to the child. O lord of men! His death will not be at your hands. The time has not yet come. The one who will bring about his death with weapons has also been born.' On hearing these invisible words, the mother became anxious as a result of affection for her son and said, 'With hands joined in salutation, I bow down before the one who has uttered these words about my son. Please let him speak some more. I wish to know who will bring about my son's death.' At that, the invisible voice spoke again. 'There is one on whose lap this child will be placed, whereupon the extra arms will fall down on the ground like five-headed snakes and the third eye on the forehead will disappear. He will be the slayer.' On hearing of the three eyes and four arms and the invisible words, all the kings on earth came to see him.

'"The lord of the earth showed them homage as they arrived, in accordance with what they deserved and placed his son separately on each king's lap, one after another. But though the child ascended thousands of

laps, what had been said did not come to pass. Then the Yadavas Samkarshana[28] and Janardana went to the capital of the Chedi kingdom to see the Yadavi who was their father's sister.[29] Rama and Keshava honoured every king in accordance with rank and superiority, inquired about everyone's welfare and seated themselves. After the two warriors had been shown homage, the queen herself placed her son on Damodara's[30] lap, with a pleasure that was more than usual. As soon as the child was placed on his lap, the extra arms fell off and the eye on the forehead sank.[31] On seeing this, she was miserable and frightened and prayed to Krishna for a boon. 'O Krishna! O mighty-armed one! I am afflicted with fear. Please grant me a boon. You provide relief to everyone who is oppressed. You are the refuge of everyone who is frightened.' 'Do not be afraid,' Janardana told his father's sister. 'O aunt! What boon will I give you? What shall I do? I will obey your words, be it possible or impossible.' At these words, she told Krishna, the son[32] of the Yadu lineage, 'O immensely strong one! Please pardon Shishupala's transgressions.' Krishna replied, 'O aunt! I will pardon one hundred offences of your son, even if they are offences that deserve death. Therefore, do not grieve.' O brave one! Such is this evil king Shishupala, evil in intelligence. Insolent because of Govinda's boon, he can now challenge you."'[33]

266(41)

'Bhishma said, "The Chedi king's intention of challenging Achyuta is not his own. There is no doubt that Krishna, lord of the universe, determined this. O Bhimasena! What king on earth dares abuse me now, as this defiler of his lineage has done, had it not been for incitement by destiny? O mighty-armed one! It is certain that he is but a small part of Hari's energy and the greatly famous Hari wishes to reclaim it. O tiger among the Kuru lineage! It is for this reason that the evil-minded king of Chedi roars like a tiger, without thinking about all of us."'

Vaishampayana said, ‘Having heard these words of Bhishma, the Chedi could not tolerate them and again spoke to Bhishma in anger.

‘Shishupala said, “O Bhishma! Let our enemies possess the influence that Keshava possesses.[34] You always arise and praise him like a bard. O Bhishma! If your mind finds pleasure in praising others, then praise the real kings, leaving out Janardana. Praise Darada of Bahlika, supreme among kings. When he was born, he tore the earth asunder. O Bhishma! Praise this Karna. He is the wielder of a mighty bow. He equals the thousand-eyed one in strength and is the ruler of Vanga and Anga. O Bhishma! Always praise Drona and Drouni.[35] The father and son are maharathas, supreme among brahmanas, and worthy of praise. O Bhishma! It is my view that if either of them is enraged, he can annihilate the earth, with all its mobile and immobile objects. O Bhishma! I do not see a lord of men who is Drona’s equal in battle, or that of Ashvatthama’s. Why don’t you wish to praise them? O Bhishma! Since your mind is always fixed on praising, why don’t you praise Shalya and the other rulers of earth? O king! But what can I do if you fail to heed the old ones. You have not heard what they, knowledgeable in dharma, said in ancient times. There are four things that must not be done—self-censure, worship of oneself, censure of others and worship of others.[36] These are not done by those who follow proper conduct. O Bhishma! If in your continual delusion you praise Keshava out of devotion towards him, no one will approve. How can you establish the entire universe in this evil-minded protector of herds, Bhoja’s[37] servant? O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Or perhaps your devotion is not a natural one. Have I not mentioned the bhulinga bird earlier? O Bhishma! The bhulinga bird lives on the other side of the Himalayas. What it spoke was always devoid of meaning. ‘Do not act out of extreme courage’ was what it always said. But in folly, it always acted out of extreme courage. O Bhishma! That foolish bird used to pick out pieces of flesh that stuck between the teeth of a feeding lion. O Bhishma! There is no doubt that the bird’s life was dependent on the lion’s pleasure. You are based in what is not dharma and

always speak like it. O Bhishma! There is no doubt that you live at the pleasure of these lords of the earth. There is no one like you, engaged in deeds that the worlds abhor."'

Vaishampayana said, 'O king! Having heard these bitter words of the king of Chedi, Bhishma uttered these words, so that the king of Chedi could hear. "I truly live at the pleasure of these lords of the earth, I who do not consider these kings as equal to even straw." Hearing these words of Bhishma, the kings became angry. Some of them trembled, and others censured Bhishma. On hearing Bhishma's words, some mighty archers exclaimed, "Though old, this Bhishma is insolent and sinful. He deserves no pardon. Let all the angry kings assemble together and kill the evil-minded Bhishma like an animal, or burn him in a fire made out of straw." Hearing these words, the intelligent Bhishma, the grandfather of the Kurus, spoke thus to the lords of the earth. "O lords of the earth! I do not see an end to these words, since there will be more words. Therefore, all of you listen to me. Whether you kill me like an animal or burn me in a fire made out of straw, I place this foot of mine on all your heads. Govinda Achyuta is here. We have offered him worship. If anyone's mind propels him towards death, let him challenge in battle Madhava Krishna, the wielder of the bow and the club, until he is brought down and his body merges with that of the god."'

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Vaishampayana said, 'On hearing these words of Bhishma, the immensely valorous king of Chedi desired to fight with Vasudeva and spoke to Vasudeva, "O Janardana! I am challenging you to battle. Come and fight with me, until I have killed you, along with all the Pandavas. O Krishna! Together with you, the Pandavas also deserve to be killed, since they have passed over the kings and worshipped you, who is not a king. O Krishna! It is my view that I must kill them. The evil-minded ones have acted like children and have offered homage to an undeserving one who is a slave and not a king." Having uttered these words, that tiger among kings stood up and roared in anger.

‘Having heard these words, in the presence of all the kings and the Pandavas, Krishna replied in a soft voice. “O kings! This son of a lady of the Satvata lineage[38] is a great enemy of the Satvata clan. Though we have never done him harm, the cruel-minded one always seeks to injure us. O kings! Hearing that we had gone to the city of Pragjyotisha, this cruel one came and burnt down Dvaraka, though he is my father’s sister’s son. When the royal ones from Bhoja were sporting themselves on Mount Raivataka, he killed and captured all of them and took them to his own city. With certain evil in his heart, he wished to obstruct my father’s sacrifice and stole the horse of the *ashvamedha*,[39] though it was surrounded by guards. The famous Babhru’s[40] wife-to-be was travelling to the Souvira region to be married. But out of delusion and desire, he abducted her. He was cruelly disposed towards his maternal uncle, the ascetic Karusha and used his powers of maya to abduct Bhadra of Vishala.[41] For the sake of my father’s sister, I have borne a great deal of unhappiness. However, it is fortunate that this is happening before all these kings. You are now witness to the malevolence he bears towards me. Know also the deeds that he has performed secretly. I can no longer pardon his offence today. He deserves to be killed only because of his insolence in front of this assembly of kings. Desiring a speedy death, this fool once offered himself to Rukmini.[42] But the fool did not obtain her, the way a shudra cannot hear the Vedas.” Having heard these words of Vasudeva, all the assembled kings began to censure the king of Chedi.

‘Having heard these words, the powerful Shishupala burst into laughter and uttered these scornful words. “O Krishna! Are you not ashamed to recount this, especially before all these kings? Rukmini was mine first.[43] O Madhusudana! No self-respecting man but you will admit before respectable ones that his wife had been someone else’s first. O Krishna! Pardon me. Whether you pardon me or whether you show me respect, whether you bear friendship or enmity towards me, what can you possibly do to me?” When he was talking in this way, the illustrious Madhusudana,

the destroyer of his enemies, angrily sliced off his head with the chakra. The mighty-armed one fell down like a mountain struck by the vajra. The kings saw a terrible energy rise up from the body of the Chedi king. O great king! It was like the sun rising in the sky. O lord of men! That energy then paid homage to the lotus-eyed Krishna, worshipped by the worlds, and entered his body. On seeing the energy enter the mighty-armed one, supreme among all beings, all of the lords of the earth thought that this was extraordinary. When the Chedi was killed by Krishna, the cloudless sky poured forth rain. The earth trembled and blazing lightning struck. Some of those lords of the earth did not speak a word. At a time when these indescribable things were happening, they looked on at Janardana. Some angrily rubbed one hand with the tip of another. Others bit their lips, losing their senses in anger. But there were other kings who privately praised Varshneya. Some were angry. Others were in the middle.[44] The maharshis were delighted and went to Keshava and praised him. So did the great-souled brahmanas and the immensely powerful kings.

'Pandava[45] then instructed his brothers to perform the funeral rites for the brave lord of the earth who had been Damaghosha's son. The brothers followed these instructions. Then Partha,[46] with all the other lords of the earth, instated his[47] son in the kingdom of Chedi.

'O king! Then occurred the sacrifice of the king of the Kurus and brought prosperity to everyone and joy to the young, with an abundance of opulence—with great quantities of riches and grain, large amounts of food and eatables, auspicious in its beginnings and with the obstructions to peace removed. It was protected by Keshava. Until the great sacrifice of rajasuya was completed, the mighty-armed Janardana, the lord Shouri, the wielder of the *sharnga*,[48] chakra and club, guarded it. On completion, after Dharmaraja Yudhishthira had bathed,[49] all the kshatriya kings came to him and uttered these words. "O Ajamidha![50] O one who is knowledgeable in dharma! Your prosperity has been extended. You have obtained sovereignty. Your fame has been extended. O Indra among kings!

With this deed, you have accomplished a great act for dharma. O tiger among men! We crave your leave. We have been shown homage in every way we desire. We now wish to return to our own kingdoms. Please grant us leave." On hearing these words of the kings, Dharmaraja Yudhishthira worshipped each king as he deserved and told all his brothers, "All these kings have assembled here out of their own pleasure. These scorchers of enemies are now leaving for their own kingdoms and are seeking my permission. O fortunate ones! Conduct these kings to the ends of our kingdom." The Pandavas were always followers of dharma. Hearing their brother's instructions, they followed each principal king, as each one deserved. O king! The powerful Dhrishtadyumna quickly conducted Virata, the maharatha Dhananjaya the great-souled Yajnasena,[51] the immensely strong Bhimasena, Bhishma and Dhritarashtra, the great warrior Sahadeva the brave, Drona and his son, Nakula Subala and his son and the sons of Droupadi and Subhadra[52] the kings of the mountains. Other bulls among the kshatriyas conducted other kshatriyas. And worshipped properly, all the brahmanas departed.

'O bull among the Bharata lineage! On the departure of all the lords among kings and the brahmanas, the powerful Vasudeva spoke to Yudhishthira. "O son of the Kuru lineage![53] I seek your leave to go to Dvaraka. Through good fortune, you have achieved rajasuya, supreme among sacrifices." Having been thus addressed, Dharmaraja told Madhusudana, "O Govinda! It is through your favour that I have achieved this supreme sacrifice. Through your grace, all the kshatriyas have come under my sway and have attended upon me, bringing rich tributes. O brave one! Without you, we will find no pleasure. But of course you must go to the city of Dvaravati." Having been thus addressed, the greatly famous Hari, with the righteous Yudhishthira with him, went to Pritha and affectionately said, "O father's sister! Your sons have now obtained sovereignty and have obtained success and great riches. You should be pleased. Please grant me leave so that I can return to Dvaraka." Keshava then bade farewell to Subhadra and Droupadi. Then, accompanied by

Yudhishthira, he came out of the inner quarters. O great king! After he had bathed and prayed and the brahmanas had blessed him, Daruka yoked the beautifully constructed chariot that looked like a cloud and came. It had the great Garuda[54] on the banner. The great-souled Pundariksha then circumambulated it and ascending, departed for the city of Dvaravati. The fortunate Dharmaraja Yudhishthira, accompanied by his brothers, followed the immensely strong Vasudeva on foot. Then Pundariksha Hari stopped the supreme chariot for a moment and spoke to Yudhishthira, Kunti's son. "O lord of the earth! Always remain steadfast in protecting your subjects, just as the god of rain[55] protects all beings and a large tree protects all birds. May you be the refuge of your relatives, like the thousand-eyed one[56] is of the immortals." After conversing with each other, Krishna and the Pandavas took each other's leave and went to their houses. O king! When Krishna, supreme among the Satvatas, had left for Dvaravati, only Duryodhana and Soubala[57] Shakuni, bulls among men, remained in that celestial sabha.'

Section Twenty-Seven

Dyuta Parva

This section has 734 shlokas and twenty-three chapters.

Chapter 268(43): 36 shlokas
Chapter 269(44): 22 shlokas
Chapter 270(45): 58 shlokas
Chapter 271(46): 35 shlokas
Chapter 272(47): 31 shlokas
Chapter 273(48): 42 shlokas
Chapter 274(49): 25 shlokas
Chapter 275(50): 28 shlokas
Chapter 276(51): 26 shlokas
Chapter 277(52): 37 shlokas
Chapter 278(53): 25 shlokas
Chapter 279(54): 29 shlokas
Chapter 280(55): 17 shlokas
Chapter 281(56): 10 shlokas
Chapter 282(57): 21 shlokas
Chapter 283(58): 43 shlokas
Chapter 284(59): 12 shlokas
Chapter 285(60): 47 shlokas
Chapter 286(61): 82 shlokas
Chapter 287(62): 38 shlokas
Chapter 288(63): 36 shlokas
Chapter 289(64): 17 shlokas
Chapter 290(65): 17 shlokas

Dyuta *means playing or gambling with dice, and also the resultant prize. So this section is about the gambling with dice.*

Vaishampayana said, ‘Duryodhana, bull among the Bharata lineage, lived in that sabha and with Shakuni, he slowly inspected that entire sabha. There, the descendant[1] of the Kuru lineage saw many divine designs that he had never seen before in the city of Nagasahrya.[2] One day, Dhritarashtra’s son,[3] the lord of the earth, arrived at a place in the middle of the sabha that was paved with crystal. The king thought it to be water and, in alarm, raised up his clothes. His mind deluded, he wandered around the sabha, shame-faced and miserable. After some time, he mistook a lake with crystal water, adorned with crystal lotuses, for land and fell into the water with his clothes on. On seeing him fall into the water, the servants laughed out in delight and on the instructions of the king,[4] gave him fresh clothes. On seeing him in that fashion, the immensely strong Bhimasena, and Arjuna and the twins, all burst out in laughter. Since he was incapable of bearing insults, he could not tolerate this. To save his face, he did not even look at them. He again drew up his clothes to ascend firm land and all the people again laughed out aloud.[5] He mistook a closed door to be open and hurt his forehead against it. On another occasion, taking an open one to be closed, he stepped away from the doorway. O lord of the earth! He thus committed various errors there. Having taken Pandavya’s[6] leave, King Duryodhana set out for Gajasahrya.[7] On having witnessed the extraordinary opulence at the great rajasuya sacrifice, his mind was unhappy. As he travelled, he was inflamed at the prosperity of the Pandavas and evil thoughts were seeded in King Duryodhana’s mind.

‘O extender of the Kuru lineage! On seeing the happiness of the Parthas, the submission of the kings, the love the worlds had for them, from children onwards, and the supreme splendour of the great-souled Pandavas, Dhritarashtra’s son Duryodhana turned pale. As he travelled, he thought intently about the sabha and the unrivalled prosperity of the intelligent Dharmaraja. Dhritarashtra’s son Duryodhana was so inattentive, that he did not respond when Subala’s son repeatedly spoke to him. On

seeing him so distracted, Shakuni responded, "O Duryodhana! Why are you travelling with all these sighs?"

'Duryodhana replied, "O maternal uncle![8] I saw the entire earth brought under Yudhishthira's suzerainty, conquered with the power and weapons of the great-souled one with white horses.[9] I witnessed the sacrifice of Partha,[10] like that of the immensely radiant Shakra among the gods. I am full of envy and am burning day and night. I am drying up like a shallow pond in the hot season.[11] Witness—when Shishupala was felled by the foremost of the Satvatas,[12] there wasn't a single man who stood by his side. The kings were burnt with the flames of the Pandavas and pardoned the crime. Who can pardon that crime? Vasudeva's great deed was improper and succeeded only because of the power of the great-souled Pandavas. Various kings brought many jewels to King Kounteya[13] and worshipped him, like vaishyas who pay taxes. On seeing the blazing prosperity of the Pandavas, I am afflicted with jealousy and am burning, though I am not made that way. I will throw myself into the fire, or consume poison, or immerse myself in water. I cannot bear to be alive. What true man in the worlds has the fortitude to see his rivals prosper, while his own self is in decline? If today I bore the prosperity that has befallen them, I would not be a woman, or one who is not a woman, or a man, or one who is not a man. On witnessing their lordship over the earth, the likes of their riches and the likes of their sacrifice, how can a man like me not be feverish? Alone, I am not capable of acquiring such royal prosperity, nor do I see any help. Therefore, I am thinking of death. On seeing the pure prosperity of Kunti's son, I consider destiny to be supreme and endeavour to be meaningless. O Soubala! In the past, I have made attempts to kill him.[14] But he overcame all of them and prospered like a lotus in the water. Therefore, I consider destiny to be supreme and endeavour to be meaningless. The Dhritarashtras[15] are declining and the Parthas are always prospering. When I see their prosperity and that beautiful sabha and the derisive laughter of the guards, I burn as if with

fire. O maternal uncle! Please allow me now to suffer in misery and tell Dhritarashtra about the envy that has pervaded me.'

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'Shakuni said, "O Duryodhana! You should not feel any jealousy towards Yudhishthira, because the Pandavas have always benefited from their good fortune. In the past, you have tried to kill them with many means. But those tigers among men escaped because of their good fortune. They obtained Droupadi as a wife and Drupada and his two sons as allies, and the valorous Vasudeva as an ally in winning the earth. O lord of the earth! They obtained an undiminished share of paternal wealth and extended it through their own energy. What is there to lament in this? Having satisfied the fire, Dhananjaya obtained the great bow Gandiva, two inexhaustible quivers and other celestial weapons. He subdued the lords of the earth with that foremost among bows and the valour of his own arms. What is there to lament in this? He freed the danava Maya from being burnt by the fire. Savyasachi, the scorcher of enemies, then made him build that sabha. On Maya's command, the terrible rakshasas named Kinkaras guard that sabha. What is there to lament in this? O king! O descendant of the Bharata lineage! You have said that you have no allies. That is not true, because your maharatha brothers are always there to help you. The mighty archer Drona with his intelligent son,[16] Radheya the son of a suta,[17] the maharatha Goutama,[18] I and my brothers, and the valorous Soumadatti[19] are with you. With these as allies, conquer the entire world."

'Duryodhana replied, "O king! If you permit, I will defeat them[20] with you and the other maharathas. When I have conquered them, the entire earth will be mine, and all the lords of the earth and the sabha with its great riches."

'Shakuni said, "With the use of force, the masses of gods cannot defeat in battle Dhananjaya, Vasudeva, Bhimasena, Yudhishthira, Nakula, Sahadeva and Drupada and his son. They are maharathas, great archers, skilled in use of weapons and invincible in battle. O king! But I know the

means through which Yudhishthira himself can be conquered. Listen and act accordingly."

'Duryodhana replied, "O maternal uncle! If there is a way to defeat them without any danger to our well-wishers and other great-souled ones, please tell me."

'Shakuni said, "Kunti's son loves to gamble with dice, but does not know how to play. If challenged to play, that Indra among kings will not be able to refuse. I am skilled in gambling with dice, there is no one on earth, or in the three worlds, who is my equal. Challenge Kunti's son to a game of dice. O king! O bull among men! With my skill in dice,[21] there is no doubt that I will win for you the kingdom and the blazing prosperity. O Duryodhana! Tell the king[22] all this. And if your father permits, there is no doubt that I will vanquish him."[23]

'Duryodhana replied, "O Soubala! You yourself say all this to Dhritarashtra, foremost among the Kurus, in the proper way. I will not be able to do it."'

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Vaishampayana said, 'O king! Having experienced the great rajasuya sacrifice of King Yudhishthira, wishing to do well to Duryodhana and having already heard Duryodhana's words about what he desired, Soubala Shakuni went to Dhritarashtra with Gandhari's son.[24] The lord of the earth was wise, though he was without sight, and was seated. Approaching the immensely intelligent one, Shakuni uttered these words. "O great king! O bull among the Bharata lineage! Duryodhana is pale, yellow and thin. Notice that he is miserable and is always worrying. Why do you not examine and determine the exact reasons why your eldest son is so miserable with a grief that can only result from an enemy?" Dhritarashtra asked, "O Duryodhana! O son! What is the reason for your great grief? O son[25] of the Kuru lineage! If it is something that I can hear, please tell me. This Shakuni tells me that you are pale, yellow and thin and that you

are worrying. I do not see any reason for your grief. O son! All my great riches are given to you. Your brothers and well-wishers never act so as to cause you displeasure. You wear the best of garments. You eat food laced with meat. You ride thoroughbred horses. Why are you then yellow and thin? Expensive beds, beautiful women, houses with all the qualities and pleasure grounds are there for your happiness. As with the gods, there is no doubt that all these await your command. O invincible one! O son! Why do you then grieve like a miserable one?"

'Duryodhana replied, "Like any miserable man, I do eat and dress. But I tolerate the passing of time, because I bear a terrible envy. He is truly a man who vanquishes his enemies and liberates his own subjects from the oppression of that enemy. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Satisfaction and pride destroy prosperity, so do compassion and fear. Immersed in these, no one achieves greatness. Having witnessed Kounteya Yudhishthira's blazing prosperity, I no longer find pleasure and that is what turns me pale. It is true that the prosperity of Kunti's son is invisible to me now. But I see the prosperity of my enemies and my own destitution as if before me now. It is for this reason that I have become pale, miserable, yellow and thin. Yudhishthira supports eighty-eight thousand snataka householders and each of them has thirty servant maidens. Besides this, ten thousand others always eat the best of food in Yudhishthira's house, served on golden plates. The king of Kamboja sends him black, dark and red skins of the *kadali*[26] deer, expensive blankets, chariots, women and cattle and horses in hundreds and thousands. A hundred she-camels roam there three hundred times. O lord of the earth! The kings brought diverse riches in great numbers to that foremost of sacrifices undertaken by Kunti's son. I have never seen nor heard of such an inflow of wealth as I saw at the sacrifice of the intelligent son of Pandu. O king! O lord! I cannot be at peace and continuously worry because I have seen that limitless flood of riches of my enemy. *Vatadhana*[27] brahmanas, possessing the wealth of cattle, stood at the gate in groups of one hundred. They brought three *kharva*s[28] of riches as tribute, but were turned back.

When they brought beautiful golden *kamandalus*[29] and filled these with tribute, it was then that they were allowed entry. In Varuna's brass pots, the ocean brought him ambrosia[30] that was better than the one brought for Shakra by the wives of the immortals. There were one thousand of them,[31] adorned with many jewels and golden. O bull among the Bharata lineage! On seeing all this, I felt as if afflicted with fever. They obtained these by going to the oceans of the east and the south.[32] They had also gone to the west. But no one can go to the north, except the birds. Listen to me as I describe an extraordinary incident there. Whenever one hundred thousand brahmanas had been fed, it was arranged there that a signal would always be given through the blowing of conch shells. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! I continuously heard the repeated blowing of conch shells.[33] On hearing these great sounds, my hair stood up on end. O lord of men! Many kings crowded the place as spectators. O great king! Those kings brought all kinds of riches with them, when they came to the sacrifice of the intelligent son of Pandu. Like vaishyas, the lords of the earth became servers to the brahmanas. O king! The king of the gods, Yama, Varuna, or the lord of the guhyakas[34] does not possess riches equal to Yudhishthira's wealth. Ever since I have witnessed the overwhelming prosperity of Pandu's son, my heart has been burning and I can find no peace."

'Shakuni said, "O you whose valour is in truth! Listen to the means whereby you can obtain the unmatched prosperity that you have seen with the Pandava. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! I am skilled in playing with dice, supreme on earth. I know their heart.[35] I know how to stake. I know the special art. Though Kounteya[36] loves dice, he has no knowledge. If challenged, he will certainly come. I will challenge him."'

Vaishampayana said, 'Having been thus addressed by Shakuni, King Duryodhana then instantly addressed these words to Dhritarasthra, "O king! This one[37] is skilled in dice. Through dice, he will win the wealth of Pandu's son. Please grant him permission." Dhritarashtra replied, "I

always follow the counsel of my immensely wise adviser, Kshatta.[38] I will consult with him and then decide on the course of action. He places dharma in the forefront, has foresight and has our supreme welfare in mind. He will look at both sides[39] and tell us certainly what should be done." Duryodhana said, "If you ask Kshatta, he will restrain you. O Indra among kings! And if you are restrained, I will certainly kill myself. O king! When I am dead, may you find happiness with Vidura. Enjoy the whole earth. What do you have to do with me?" Dhritarashtra heard those painful words, though they were affectionately uttered. Submitting to Duryodhana's desire, he instructed his servants. "Let artisans immediately build for me a beautiful and large sabha, with a thousand pillars and a hundred doors, which is fit to be seen. When it is scattered with gems and dice everywhere, quietly come and report to me that it has been built well and that it is fit to be entered." O great king! In an attempt to pacify Duryodhana, Dhritarasthra, lord of the earth, summoned Vidura, because he never took a decision without asking Vidura. Knowing the evils of gambling, he was still attracted towards it because of affection towards his son.

'Having heard this, the intelligent Vidura knew that the door to *kali*[40] was nigh. On seeing that the path to destruction was about to be opened, he quickly came to Dhritarashtra. The brother came to the great-souled elder brother and bowing down, with his head touching the other's feet, uttered these words. "O king! O lord! I do not approve of the decision you have taken. You should act in such a way that discord does not arise among your sons[41] because of this gambling." Dhritarashtra replied, "O Kshatta! If the gods in heaven show us their favour, there is no doubt that there will be no quarrel between my sons and my other sons. Auspicious or not auspicious, benign or malign, let this gambling match between relatives, occur, as it is certainly destined. When I and Bhishma, bull among the Bharata lineage, are there, no evil can possibly occur, even if fate has decreed it. Immediately ascend a chariot that is yoked with steeds with the speed of the wind. Go to Khandavaprastha and bring Yudhishthira. O Vidura! I tell

you that there will be no going back on my decision. I think it is supreme destiny that has led to this." Having heard this, the intelligent Vidura thought that this should not be. Extremely unhappy, he went to the immensely wise son of the river.'[42]

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Janamejaya asked, 'How did that eventful gambling match among the brothers take place, which caused so much misery to my grandfathers, the Pandavas? O you who are immersed in the brahman! Who were the kings who were present in that sabha? Who among them approved of the match and who did not? O brahmana! O supreme among brahmanas! I wish to hear all this in detail, because this was the cause of the destruction of the world.'

The suta said, 'Having been thus addressed by the king, Vyasa's powerful student, knowledgeable in all the Vedas, recounted everything as it had happened.'[43]

Vaishampayana said, 'O supreme among the Bharata lineage! O great king! If you wish to hear it, then listen. I will tell you in detail what happened. Knowing Vidura's views, Dhritarashtra, the son of Ambika, again privately spoke these words to Duryodhana, "O Gandhari's son! Forget the dice, Vidura does not approve of it. The immensely intelligent one will not speak in vain. I think what Vidura has said is for my supreme welfare. O son! Act accordingly, for I think that it will be for your welfare too. Vidura knows all the sacred texts, with their mysteries, that the illustrious and wise[44] devarshi Brihaspati, preceptor of Vasava, taught to the intelligent king of the gods. O son! I always follow his counsel. O king! The intelligent Vidura is considered as foremost among the Kurus, like the immensely wise Uddhava is acclaimed among the Vrishnis. O son! Dissension brings destruction to the kingdom, so give up the idea. You have obtained what the supreme texts say are what a son should obtain from his father and mother. O son! You have obtained the rank of your father and grandfather. You have studied, you have become learned in the

sacred texts. You have always been reared at home. You are the eldest among your brothers and you have been established in the kingdom. Do you not consider this fortunate? You obtain the best of food and garments, unobtainable by other men. O mighty-armed one! O son! Having obtained this, why do you grieve? O mighty-armed one! This great kingdom of your father and grandfather is prospering. When you rule it, you shine like the lord of the gods in heaven. I know you to be wise. Then what is the reason for this grief? Why is your misery swelling up? Tell me."

'Duryodhana replied, "I am an evil man that I eat and dress, despite what I see. It has been said that a man who does not feel envy is a wretch. O Indra among kings! O lord! This ordinary prosperity does not please me. I am miserable on seeing the blazing prosperity of Kunti's son. The entire earth is subject to Yudhishthira's suzerainty. I am telling you that I am miserable, since I am still established here, alive. The Chaitrakis, the Koukuras, the Karaskaras and the Lohajanghas live in Yudhishthira's abode, like prostrate slaves. The Himalayas, the oceans, the regions along the shores that produce all the gems and all others are inferior to Yudhishthira's abode. O lord of the earth! Since I was the eldest and foremost, Yudhishthira offered me homage and appointed me to the task of receiving the gems. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Of the riches that were brought there, supreme and invaluable, one could not see the near end, nor the far one. My hands were too tired to receive all those riches. When those who had brought riches from distant places had left, I was still tired. Having brought gems from Bindusarovar,[45] Maya constructed a platform of crystal. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! On seeing the place full of lotuses, I took it to be water. On seeing me draw up my clothes, Vrikodara laughed at me. He thought me to be devoid of riches and deluded by the superior wealth of the enemy. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Had I possessed the ability, I would have killed Vrikodara there. The derision of a rival burns me. O lord of men! I again saw a similar pond full of lotuses. Thinking it to be made out of crystal, I fell into the water. At this, Krishna and Partha[46] laughed out loudly at me, and

so did Droupadi and the other women. This pained my heart. My garments having become wet, the servants gave me others on the king's[47] orders and this too made me more miserable. O lord of men! Listen when I tell you about another trick. In trying to go out through what looked like a door, but wasn't a door, I hit my head against a crystal slab and got hurt. Then, on seeing this from a distance, the twins were amused. In great sorrow, they held me in their arms. Sahadeva then repeatedly told me, as if amazed, 'O king! This is the door. Pass this way.' I saw jewels there, whose names I had not even heard of earlier. That is the reason why my heart is burning."'

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'Duryodhana said, "O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Listen to the main treasures I saw at the Pandava's, brought by the lords of the earth from everywhere. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! On seeing those riches, grown and mined, I no longer feel myself to be conscious. Kamboja gave riches in the form of skins of *eda*,[49] fine cat skins lined with gold, the best skins from deer, three hundred horses with parrot-like noses that were grey and of mixed colours and three hundred she-camels fattened with palm,[50] pulses[51] and nuts.[52] All the *govasana* and *dasamiya* brahmanas came to please the immensely fortunate and great-souled Dharmaraja.[53] They brought three kharvas of tribute, but were barred entry, and stood at the gate. When they brought beautiful and golden water pots[54] and offered their tribute in those, they were allowed entry. O great king! As tribute, the shudra kings who lived in Bharukaccha[55] brought one hundred thousand slave girls from the Karpasika region. They were dark and slender, with long hair and adorned in golden ornaments. They also brought *ranku*[56] hides, fit for the best of brahmanas, and horses from the Gandhara region. The men whose crops depend on the showers of Indra,[57] those who are born near the mouths of rivers, along the shores and banks of oceans and rivers, the Vairamas, the Paradas, the Vangas and the

Kitavas, brought many riches and many jewels—goats, cattle, gold, donkeys, camels, honey from fruit and different types of garments. But restrained, they stood at the door.

‘“Maharatha King Bhagadatta, the brave ruler of Pragjyotisha and the strong ruler of the mlechhas, came with yavanas. He brought a tribute of thoroughbred horses, as swift as the wind, but was barred and stood at the gate. After presenting a receptacle that was like iron[58] and swords with handles of ivory, Bhagadatta of Pragjyotisha left. I saw that many people from different directions were refused admission at the gate, though they brought rich tributes of gold and silver—with two eyes, three eyes, one eye on the forehead, those who wore headdresses, those who had no fixed abode, Bahukas, cannibals and those with only one foot. They brought horses that were as swift as thought, with the colours of *indragopa*s[59] and parrots, or with the colours of the rainbow[60] or red like the evening sky.[61] They were of many shades and there were also seized forest horses,[62] with the speed of the mind.

‘“They also gave him[63] rich tributes of the best quality of gold. There were Chinas, Hunas, Shakas,[64] Oudras,[65] those who live inside mountains, Varshneyas, Harahunas, dark ones and those who live in the Himalayas. I do not remember the order of those who were barred entry at the gate. They gave much tribute in many forms. There were tens of thousands of asses, giant in form and with black necks. They were famous everywhere and trained well, capable of killing hundreds. There were large and colourful garments pleasant to the touch, from Bahlika[66] and China. There was wool, ranku[67] hides, silk, jute, cotton and thousands of other garments. They had the colour of lotuses and were soft, though not made of cotton. There were hides. There were long and sharp swords, double-edged swords,[68] spears, battleaxes and a hundred battleaxes from the other side of the ocean.[69] They brought juices, fragrances and many jewels in thousands. But despite the tribute, they were barred entry and

stood at the gate. Shakas, Tukharas, Kankas, Romashas[70] and men with horns brought as tribute one hundred million[71] horses that could travel great and long distances. With crores of tribute of many kinds and unlimited gold, they stood at the door and were barred entry. Expensive seats, vehicles, beds, and many kinds of chariots adorned with gems and gold, made of ivory and decorated with gold, well-trained horses covered with tiger skins, many kinds of cushions, thousands of gems, *naracha*s,[72] half-narachas, many kinds of weapons—this was the great tribute paid by the king from the east,[73] when he entered the great-souled Pandava's sacrificial arena."'

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'Duryodhana said, "O unblemished one! Listen to me as I describe the large and varied tribute, full of riches, given by the kings for the sake of the sacrifice. The kings who live along the banks of the river Shailoda, between Mounts Meru and Mandara, and enjoy the pleasurable shade of bamboo[74]—the Khasas, Ekashanas, Jyohas, Pradaras, Dirghavenus, Pashupas, Kunindas, Tanganas and Paratanganas brought large masses of *pipilika* gold in vessels, gathered by ants.[75] The strong residents of the mountains brought as tribute dark and coloured tails of yaks and others that were as white as moonbeams, a lot of sweet honey from the flowers of the Himalayas, garlands and water from the northern Kuru region and immensely powerful herbs from northern Kailasa. They bowed and stood at the gate of King Ajatashatru, but were denied entry. O lord of the earth! There were kings from the other side of the Himalayas, from the mountains where the sun rises, from the banks of Varishena and Lohitya,[76] from the banks of the ocean and kiratas who live on roots and fruit and wear skins. They brought large masses of sandal and aloe wood, *kaliya*,[77] skins, jewels, gold, fragrances, ten thousand kirata slave girls, beautiful animals and birds from distant regions and copious quantities of

radiant gold from the mountains. But despite all this tribute, they were refused entry and waited at the gate.

‘“O lord of the earth! Kayavyas, Daradas, Darvas, Shuras, Vaiyamakas, Oudumbaras, Durvibhagas, Paradas, Bahlikas, Kashmiras, Kundamanas, Pourakas, Hamsakayanas, Shibis, Trigartas, Youdheyas, the kings of Madra and Kekaya, Ambashthas, Koukuras, Tarkshyas, Vastrapas, Pahlavas,[78] Vasatas, Mouleyas, Kshudrakas, Malavas, Shoundikas, Kukkuras, Shakas, Angas, Vangas, Pundras, Shanavatyas, Gayas, Sujatayas, Shrenimanas—all illustrious kshatriyas with weapons in their hands—brought hundreds of tribute for Ajatashatru. The chiefs from Vanga and Kalinga, from Tamralipta and Pundraka, brought garments and silk from the Koushiki.[79] On the instructions of the king, the gatekeepers told them, ‘If you bring large and great tribute, only then will you be admitted.’ So they each gave one thousand elephants, with tusks like the shafts of ploughs, caparisoned in gold and covered in cushions with the colour of lotuses. They were as large as mountains, always in rut and came from the shores of Kamyaka Lake. They were covered in armour, patient and trained well. They[80] then entered the gate. These and many other masses came from all the directions. There were other great-souled ones who offered many gems. The gandharva kin Chitraratha, Vasava’s friend, gave four hundred horses with the speed of the wind. The gandharva Tumburu happily gave one hundred horses that had the colour of mango leaves, with gold harnesses. O Kouravya! O lord of the earth! The famous king of the Shukaras gave many hundreds of valuable elephants. As tribute, Virata from Matsya gave two thousand rutting elephants, caparisoned in gold. O king! King Vasudana from the kingdom of Pamshu gave twenty-six elephants and one thousand horses, all harnessed in gold. O lord of men! They had great speed and strength and were of the right age. He offered this and many other riches to Pandava. O lord of the earth! Yajnasena gave Pritha’s sons fourteen thousand servant girls, ten thousand male servants with their wives and twenty-six chariots pulled by elephants. He offered his entire kingdom for the sacrifice. The Simhalas

offered the best jewels found in the ocean, lapis lazuli, pearls and conch shells and hundreds of covers for housing elephants. Many dark-complexioned men, eyes copper-red and attired in garments adorned with gems, brought tribute and waited at the gate, having been refused entry.

‘“Brahmanas brought gifts out of affection, kshatriyas because they had been defeated and vaishyas and shudras out of servitude. Out of affection and respect, they waited on Yudhishthira—all the mlecchas and all the varnas, the superior, the middle and the inferior, arriving from many countries and many races. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! In Yudhishthira’s abode, I saw the kings make such large and great offerings to my enemy that I wish to die from grief. Now let me tell you about the servants of the Pandavas, to whom Yudhishthira supplies both raw and cooked food. There are three hundred thousand soldiers mounted on elephants. There are a hundred million chariots and innumerable foot soldiers. The raw food is measured out in one place, cooked elsewhere and distributed at another place. Auspicious sounds are heard. Among all the varnas, I have not seen a single one in Yudhishthira’s abode who has not obtained food, is unhappy and has not been rewarded well. Eighty-eight thousand snatakas live a householder’s life, each supported by thirty servant girls provided by Yudhishthira. They are happy and satisfied and always pray for the destruction of his enemies. In Yudhishthira’s abode, ten thousand ascetics who have controlled their seed, eat from golden plates. O lord of the earth! Yajnaseni[81] does not eat until she has seen to it that everyone has eaten and is full, even hunchbacks and dwarfs. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! There are only two who have not paid tribute to Kunti’s son—the Panchalas because of the marriage alliance[82] and the Andhakas and the Vrishnis because of friendship.”’

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‘Duryodhana said, “The arya kings are devoted to truth and great in their vows, complete in their knowledge, eloquent and immersed in *vedanta*,[83] forbearing, modest, famous and with dharma in their hearts. Those kings

who have been anointed wait on him.[84] There I saw many thousands of wild cows that had been brought by the kings as dakshina, with brass pots for milking. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! As a mark of respect and of their own volition, the kings brought supreme vessels for the consecration there. Bahlika brought the chariot that was inlaid with gold. Sudakshina[85] yoked it with white horses from Kamboja. In affection, the immensely strong Sunitha[86] fixed the axle. Willingly, the king of Chedi[87] himself fixed the flagstaff. The king from the south had the armour ready, Magadha[88] the garland and the headdress. The great archer Vasudana[89] held the king of elephants, sixty years old. Matsya[90] fixed the sides,[91] Ekalavya held the footwear. Avanti had the many kinds of water required for the final bath. Chekitana[92] gave the quiver, the king of Kashi the bow and Shalya the sword with a golden hilt and with straps inlaid with gold. Dhoumya and the immensely ascetic Vyasa performed the anointing, after having placed Narada and the sages Devala–Asita[93] at the forefront. The maharshis attended the *abhisheka*[94] with pleasure. Just as the saptarshis approach the great Indra, lord of the gods, in heaven, with Jamadagni's son,[95] the great-souled ones, learned in the Vedas and the mantras, came with large quantities of gifts.

'"Satyaki, with truth as his valour, held up the umbrella. Dhananjaya and Bhima fanned Pandava.[96] Varuna's conch shell had been constructed by Vishvakarma in ancient times with a thousand pieces of gold and had been given by Prajapati to Indra in that ancient era. The ocean now brought it for him[97] and Krishna anointed him with that. At this, I felt benumbed. They went to the western, eastern and southern oceans.[98] O father! But they did not go to the north, which is for the birds. To make it auspicious, hundreds of conch shells were blown and when they were blown together, my hair stood up at the roar. Kings were deprived of their own energy and fell prostrate on the ground. But Dhristadyumna, the Pandavas, Satyaki and Krishna as the eighth were valorous and kindly

disposed towards each other.[99] They maintained themselves and on seeing me and the kings unconscious on the ground, laughed at us. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Then, delightedly, Bibhatsu gave the principal brahmanas five hundred bullocks, their horns plated with gold. Like lord Harishchandra, Kounteya accomplished the rajasuya and his prosperity was supreme. Shambara's slayer,[100] Youvanashva, Manu, King Prithu and Bhagiratha couldn't rival this. O lord! O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Having witnessed Partha's prosperity like that of Harishchandra, how should I see any good in remaining alive? O lord of men! A yoke attached by a blind man becomes loose. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! The younger ones[101] are prospering, while the older ones[102] are decaying. O supreme among the Kurus! Having witnessed all this, I find no refuge, whichever way I look. That is the reason I am becoming thin. That is the reason I am pale and miserable."'

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'Dhritarashtra said, "O son! You are the eldest and the son of my eldest wife.[103] Do not bear hatred towards the Pandavas. He who bears hatred is always as unhappy as in death. O bull among the Bharata lineage! Yudhishthira is inexperienced. He is your equal in goals and in friends. He does not hate you. Why do you hate him? O king! O son! You are his equal in birth and valour. Why do you covet your brother's riches? Do not desire out of delusion. Be calm and virtuous. O bull among the Bharata lineage! If you wish to accomplish the glory of a sacrifice, let the priests arrange for the great sacrifice known as *saptatantu*. The kings will bring you great riches, gems and ornaments, from affection and respect. O son! The terrible act of desiring another's property brings misery. He who is satisfied with his own, remains anchored in his own dharma and is happy. The signs of wealth are lack of concern for another's prosperity, constant perseverance in one's own tasks and the protection of what one has obtained. The man who is unmoved in calamities and always skilled and engaged in his own, vigilant and humble, will always witness good

fortune. O bull among the Bharata lineage! Give at sacrifices, enjoy the pleasures you desire, sport in the company of women and be at peace."

'Duryodhana replied, "You know. But you confuse me, like a boat tied to another boat. Are you not attentive to your own interests? Do you have hostile feelings towards me? Dhritarashtra's sons[104] follow your command and I don't rule them. You always say that everything must be done for the sake of the future. If the leader has lost the path because he has been deluded by the enemy, how can his followers follow that path? O king! You are old in your wisdom, you follow the elders and you have control over your senses. You should not confuse us, when we are engaged in our own tasks. Brihaspati has said that the royal path must be different from that followed by the worlds. Therefore, a king must always be vigilant in protecting his own self-interest. O great king! A kshatriya's path is one devoted to victory. O bull among the Bharata lineage! As long as one follows one's creed, dharma and lack of dharma are irrelevant. O bull among the Bharata lineage! A charioteer uses his whip to drive out in all the directions, wishing to attack the blazing fortunes of his enemy. Those who are skilled in weapons say that the weapon isn't only the one that cuts. A weapon is that which vanquishes the enemy, be it open or hidden. O king! Discontent is the root of prosperity. That is the reason I wish to be discontented. The supreme one is one who strives for prosperity. In attaining prosperity and riches, shouldn't self-interest be our way? Others take away what has been obtained before. That is known as the dharma of kings. It was during a period of truce that Shakra cut off Namuchi's[105] head, because he knew that enmity towards a foe is eternal. Like a snake swallows rats, the earth swallows up two—the king who does not strive and the brahmana who does not live at home. O lord of the earth! No one is by nature another man's enemy. The enemy is that one whose pursuits are the same as one's own, and not anyone else. He who stupidly watches the ascendance of the enemy's party, leaves a disease unattended and cuts off his own roots. An enemy may be insignificant. But if he is allowed to grow in valour, he will destroy one, the way an anthill

destroys the roots of a tree it has grown on. O Ajamidha![106] O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Do not be pleased at the enemy's prosperity. The wise ones should not bear the burden of this policy on their heads. A person who wishes for an increase in his prosperity, the way he has himself grown since birth, grows and prospers with his relatives. Valour brings swift growth. As long as I do not obtain the wealth of the Pandavas, I will always be in doubt. I will either obtain those riches, or lay down my life in the field of battle. O lord of the earth! If I cannot equal him,[107] what is the point of being alive today? The Pandavas are always prospering and we are stagnating."'

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'Shakuni said, "Challenge the enemy to a game of dice. I will rob Pandu's son Yudhishthira of the prosperity that you have seen, which has been burning you. Be clear that I will not fight in front of armies. Through the throw of dice, a skilful one can vanquish one that is not skilful. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Know that the bow and arrows are my dice. The heart of the dice is the string of my bow. Know that the carpet[109] is my chariot."

'Duryodhana said, "O king! This one, who is skilled in dice, is ready to win over the prosperity of Pandu's son with dice. O father! You should find that pleasing."

'Dhritarashtra replied, "I always listen to the counsel of my brother, the great-souled Vidura. I will decide on the course of action after meeting with him."

'Duryodhana said, "O Kourava! There is no doubt that Vidura will make you refrain from the resolution. He is engaged in the welfare of the Pandavas and not mine. O descendant of the Kuru lineage![110] No man should engage in his task with another's counsel, because two minds seldom agree on a course of action. Like a straw mat[111] during the rainy season, a fool that abhors fear stands and destroys himself. Neither disease

nor Yama wait for prosperity to come. Therefore, let us act for the good while there is time."

'Dhritarashtra replied, "O son! I never like a fight with those who are stronger. Enmity creates distortion, and that itself is a weapon, though it is not made of iron. O prince! You think that disaster will bring welfare, this terrible collection of quarrels. Once it starts, in one way or another, it will release bows, swords and arrows."

'Duryodhana said, "The ancient ones created the rules of dice. It leads to neither evil, nor blows. Today, you should approve of Shakuni's words. Let your instructions be issued for the swift construction of a sabha.[112] Because the doors of heaven will become closer, it is appropriate for us to be engaged in this. Approve of this act with the Pandavas and we will then stand equal to them."

'Dhritarashtra replied, "O Indra among men! I do not like the words that you utter. But do what brings you pleasure. Later, you will remember your words and suffer, because such words cannot bring prosperity to those who abide by dharma. A long time in the past, Vidura, who follows wisdom and learning, had foretold all this. The great calamity that will destroy the seed of the kshatriyas has now arrived and we are powerless."'

Vaishampayana said, 'Having uttered these words, the wise Dhritarashtra decided that destiny alone was supreme. Fate robbed the king of his senses and he instructed his men[113] to obey his son's words. "Carefully build one thousand pillars adorned with gold and lapis lazuli. Let there be a hundred gates with arches made of crystal. Let the beautiful sabha be swiftly built, one *krosha*[114] long and one krosha wide." On hearing these words, without hesitation, thousands of wise and skilled artisans swiftly built the sabha and stocked it with every kind of object. Then, in a short space of time, they informed the king that the beautiful assembly hall was ready and that it had been adorned with multicoloured gems and beautiful golden seats. Then Dhritarashtra, lord of men, spoke to the learned Vidura, foremost among his advisers, "Go to Prince Yudhishthira and swiftly bring him here at my command. Say that he and

his brothers should come here and see this beautiful sabha that I have built, with many gems and decorated with expensive beds and seats. We will then have a game of dice among well-wishers." Knowing his son's mind and that fate could not be avoided, King Dhritarashtra, lord of men, acted thus. Vidura, supreme among learned ones, did not approve of his brother's words and thought them to be unjust. He spoke to him, "O king! I do not approve of this errand. Do not do this. I fear the destruction of our lineage. O Indra among men! When the sons are disunited, a quarrel is certain and I am concerned about this game of dice." Dhritarashtra replied, "O Kshatta! Unless destiny turns adverse, I am not worried about a quarrel. The universe is under the control of the creator. The entire world does not run independently. O Vidura! Therefore, today, go to the king[115] at my command and quickly bring Kunti's invincible son, Yudhishthira, here."'

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Vaishampayana said, 'On King Dhritarashtra's forceful command, Vidura started off towards the wise Pandavas, on horses that were noble and strong, trained well and possessing great speed. He proceeded swiftly and came to the king's[116] city and after being worshipped by the brahmanas, the immensely intelligent one entered. The palace was like Kubera's abode and the one with dharma in his heart[117] went to Dharmaputra Yudhishthira. Ajatashatru, the great-souled king who was always devoted to the truth, welcomed Vidura with due homage and worship and then asked about the welfare of Dhritarashtra and his sons.

'Yudhishthira asked, "O Kshatta! I do not see your mind to be happy. I hope everything is well. Are the sons[118] obedient to their elders? Are the commoners obedient to his rule?"

'Vidura replied, "The great-souled king is well with his sons. Surrounded by his kin, he rules like Indra. O king! Surrounded by his sons who are obedient, he is content. He is without worries and is firm in the desires of his own heart. The king of the Kurus has first asked me to

enquire about your health and welfare and then say, 'I have built a sabha that matches yours. O son! Please come with your brothers and see it. O Partha! Assemble there with your brother and have a game of dice with your well-wishers. We will be delighted at your arrival and so will all the Kurus who are assembled there.' The great-souled King Dhritarashtra has assembled gamblers there.[119] You will see the rogues[120] assembled there. I have come here for this. O king! Agree."

'Yudhishthira said, "O Kshatta! Gambling can produce quarrels. Knowing this, which intelligent one will consent to gambling? What do you think is the right course of action for us? We are always obedient to your words."

'Vidura replied, "I know that gambling is the root of all misery. I made every effort to restrain him. However, the king has sent me to you. O wise one! Knowing this, do what is best."

'Yudhishthira asked, "Other than the sons of King Dhritarashtra, who are the other rogues[121] who are there to play? O Vidura! I am asking you. Tell me. Who are the hundreds with whom one will have to play?"

'Vidura replied, "O lord of the earth! There is Shakuni, king of Gandhara. That king is eager to play, has a skilled hand and knows the nature of the dice. There are Vivimshati, King Chitrasena, Satyavrata, Purumitra and Jaya."

'Yudhishthira said, "It seems that some of the most feared rogues[122] have assembled there. They are sure to play with the powers of maya. However, everything is under the control of the creator. I will not refuse to play with those rogues. O Vidura! I do not wish to go and gamble on King Dhritarashtra's command. A father always has a son's welfare in mind. Therefore, tell me what I should do.[123] I have no desire to gamble with Shakuni. But if the confident[124] one challenges me in the sabha, I will never refuse, because that has been my eternal vow."'

Vaishampayana said, 'Having thus spoken to Vidura, Dharmaraja instructed that all the arrangements for the journey should quickly be made. Next day, he set out with his army and his attendants, and with the

honoured Droupadi and other women of the household. “Destiny robs us of reason, like a glare falling before the eye.[125] As if tied in a noose, man follows the will of the creator.” Uttering these words, King Yudhishthira set out with Kshatta. Partha, the destroyer of enemies, could not ignore the summons. He ascended the chariot given by Bahlika. Partha Pandava, the destroyer of enemies, dressed in royal garments, left with his brothers. Brahmanas walked ahead of him and his regal prosperity blazed. He was summoned by Dhritarashtra in accordance with what has been decreed by destiny.

‘Arriving in Hastinapura, he went to Dhritarashtra’s palace. Pandava, the one with dharma in his heart, met Dhritarashtra and Drona, Bhishma, Karna and Kripa. As is proper, the lord also met Drona’s son.[126] The mighty-armed one then met Somadatta, Duryodhana, Shalya, the valorous Soubala and all the other kings who had assembled there before him, and Jayadratha and all the other Kurus. Surrounded by his brothers, the mighty-armed one then entered the abode of the immensely wise King Dhritarashtra and met there Queen Gandhari, who was always devoted to her husband. She was surrounded by her daughters-in-law, like Rohini[127] by the stars. After showing homage to Gandhari and being welcomed by her in return, he saw his aged father,[128] the wise lord whose eyesight was his knowledge.[129] O king! The king inhaled the fragrances of the heads[130] of the descendants[131] of the Kuru lineage and of the four Pandavas,[132] led by Bhimasena. O lord of the earth! On seeing the handsome Pandavas, tigers among men, all the Kouravas were extremely delighted. Taking their leave, the Pandavas entered their houses, full of jewels. The women came to see them, Droupadi at their forefront. On witnessing Yajnasena’s[133] blazing prosperity, Dhritarashtra’s daughters-in-law were not enthused.

‘After having conversed with the women, the tigers among men went out. They performed physical exercises and the due rituals. After the daily rituals were over, they covered themselves all over with divine

sandalwood. When their minds were pure, the brahmanas pronounced benedictions on them. Having eaten the best of food, they retired to their sleeping quarters. Women sung to them and the descendants of the Kurus went to sleep. They spent the pleasant night in sexual pursuits. After resting for some time, they discarded their sleep[134] to the sound of praises of bards. Having happily slept during the night, they performed all the daily rites in the morning and entered the beautiful sabha, crowded by rogues.'[135]

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'Shakuni said, "O king! The carpet has been spread out in the sabha and these people have found the time. O Yudhishthira! The time for gambling and fixing the nature of the dice has come."

'Yudhishthira replied, "O king! Dishonest gambling is evil. There is no kshatriya valour in that. Nor is there any good policy in it. Why do you then praise playing with the dice? O Shakuni! The learned do not praise deceitful gambling. Like a cruel person, do not defeat us through a crooked path."

'Shakuni said, "He who knows the numbers and is knowledgeable about deceptions, is tireless in the art of gambling and is extremely intelligent in gambling, is the one who knows all the techniques. Through handling the dice, one can defeat the enemy. Blaming destiny is pointless. O king! Let us gamble and have no anxiety. Let us immediately decide on the stakes and not tarry."

'Yudhishthira replied, "Asita–Devala are supreme among sages and always frequents the doors of the worlds. They have said that it is a sin to play with deceitful gamblers. It is best to win a battle through dharma, in which case, gambling is sanctioned. Aryas do not use mleccha language, nor use deceit in behaviour. Men who are truthful in their vows do not use trickery in a battle. We have always sought to protect deserving brahmanas with our strength. O Shakuni! Do not play beyond those limits and do not

win in excess.[136] I do not desire happiness and riches through deceit. But even if a gambler plays without deceit, gambling is never praised."

'Shakuni said, "O Yudhishthira! The learned triumph over non-learned only through trickery. That is how the wise triumph over the stupid, but people don't call it trickery. In approaching me for the game, if you think that I will resort to trickery, if that is your fear, then refrain from the game."

'Yudhishthira replied, "O king! Once challenged, I will not withdraw. That is the vow I have taken. Fate is the powerful one and we are in the power of destiny. Who in this assembly will I play with? What is the counter-stake? Let the gambling begin."

'Duryodhana said, "O lord of the earth! I will stake all my jewels and my riches. My maternal uncle, Shakuni, will gamble on my behalf."

'Yudhishthira replied, "To me, it seems unfair that one man should gamble in another's place. O learned one! You know this. However, if that is what you want, so be it."'

Vaishampayana said, 'When arrangements had been made for the gambling, all the kings, with Dhritarashtra at the forefront, entered the sabha—Bhishma, Drona, Kripa, the immensely intelligent Vidura. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Others also followed, not at all pleased in their minds. Those immensely energetic ones, with necks like those of lions, sat separately and together, on many colourful seats. O king! With the assembled kings, that sabha was radiant, like resplendent heaven when the gods have assembled. O great king! They were all brave warriors, learned in the Vedas and their forms were like that of the sun. Then the gambling between the well-wishers started.

'Yudhishthira said, "O king! This is a beautiful chain of gems, inlaid in supreme gold. It represents a lot of riches and has been procured from the whirl of the ocean.[137] O king! This is my stake. What is your counter-stake? Let it be placed in the proper order and I will win this gamble."

'Duryodhana replied, "I also possess many gems and riches. But they serve no particular end for me. I will win this gamble."'

Vaishampayana said, ‘Then Shakuni, who knew the heart of the dice, grasped the dice. And Shakuni told Yudhishthira, “I have won.”’

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‘Yudhishthira said, “O Shakuni! You have won this gamble from me by using deceit. Let us now grasp the dice and play a thousand times. I have a hundred laden jars, each filled with a thousand gold coins. O king! That apart, my treasury has inexhaustible gold and much gold.[138] Those are the riches I now stake to gamble with you.”’

Vaishampayana said, ‘As soon as he had spoken, Shakuni told the king, “I have won.”

‘Yudhishthira said, “My royal chariot is covered with tiger skin and is worth a thousand. It is finely built, beautiful, makes a thunderous noise and is adorned with nets of bells. It gladdens the heart and brought us here. This sacred chariot, supreme among all chariots, roars like the clouds and the ocean. It is drawn by eight horses that are famous throughout the kingdom. They are noble and have the colour of ospreys. No one who walks the earth can escape their hooves. O king! These are my riches that I now gamble with you for.”’

Vaishampayana said, ‘Having heard this, Shakuni used deceit and told Yudhishthira, “I have won.”

‘Yudhishthira said, “O Soubala! I have one thousand elephants that are in must. They have golden girdles and are hung with golden garlands. They are spotted.[139] They are well trained, with fine tusks and are capable of bearing kings. They can withstand every kind of noise in battle. They have giant tusks like shafts[140] and each bull has with it eight she-elephants. All of these elephants have the shade of new clouds[141] and are capable of battering down enemy cities. O king! These are my riches that I now gamble with you for.”’

Vaishampayana said, ‘Having heard these words, Soubala laughed at Partha. Shakuni told Yudhishthira, “I have won.”

‘Yudhishthira said, “I have one hundred thousand slave girls. They are young and extremely beautiful. They wear bracelets and armlets,[142] necklaces of gold coins and wear ornaments. They wear expensive garlands and ornaments, beautiful garments, and are anointed with sandalwood paste. They wear jewels and gold and all of them are dressed in sheer garments. They are skilled in singing and dancing. On my instructions, they wait upon and serve the snatakas, advisers and kings. O king! These are my riches that I now gamble with you for.”’

Vaishampayana said, ‘Having heard these words, Shakuni resorted to deceit and told Yudhishthira, “I have won.”

‘Yudhishthira said, “I have thousands of male slaves. They are always dressed in fine garments and are skilled and ready to serve. They are wise, young, skilled and intelligent and wear polished earrings. With plates in their hands, they feed the guests day and night. O king! These are my riches that I now gamble with you for.”’

Vaishampayana said, ‘Having heard these words, Shakuni resorted to deceit and told Yudhishthira, “I have won.”

‘Yudhishthira said, “I have as many[143] chariots. They have pennants and are equipped with golden vessels. There are also well-trained horses, charioteers and wonderful warriors. Regardless of whether they fight or do not fight, each of them receives one thousand as monthly salary. O king! These are my riches that I now gamble with you for.”’

Vaishampayana said, ‘Having heard these words of Partha, the evil one resorted to deceit. Shakuni told Yudhishthira, “I have won.”

‘Yudhishthira said, “I have gandharva horses that are spotted and have the colour of partridges. They have golden harnesses and were happily given by Chitraratha[144] to Gandivadhanva.[145] O king! These are my riches that I now gamble with you for.”’

Vaishampayana said, ‘Having heard this, Shakuni resorted to deceit and told Yudhishthira, “I have won.”

‘Yudhishthira said, “I have ten thousand chariots, carts and horses. They are yoked to the best draught animals. I have thousands of soldiers from

each varna. They drink milk and feed on rice and grain. There are sixty thousand of them and all of them have broad chests. O king! These are my riches that I now gamble with you for."'

Vaishampayana said, 'On hearing these words, Shakuni resorted to deceit and told Yudhishthira, "I have won."

'Yudhishthira said, "I have four hundred treasure chests made of copper and iron. Each of them has five receptacles filled with beaten gold. O king! These are my riches that I now gamble with you for."'

Vaishampayana said, 'On hearing these words, Shakuni resorted to deceit and told Yudhishthira, "I have won."'

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'Vidura said, "O great king![146] Listen to what I am going to tell you and learn, even though a dying man finds no pleasure in medicine. In earlier times, when the evil-minded Duryodhana, the destroyer of the Bharata lineage, was born, he cried out in the voice of a jackal. He is destined to cause our destruction. A jackal lives in your house in Duryodhana's form and you do not know this. From me, listen to what Kavya[147] said. 'The collector of honey obtains the honey, but does not know about the fall.[148] Having climbed, he will later be immersed, or fall down and perish.' Like the collector of honey, he[149] is drunk at the prospect of gambling with dice. He does not know of the fall, consequent to the enmity with these maharathas. O great king! You know the normal royal practice.[150] The Andhakas, Yadavas and Bhojas assembled and abandoned Kamsa. At their request, Krishna, the slayer of enemies, killed him[151] and all the relatives rejoiced for a hundred years. On your instructions, let Savyasachi oppress Suyodhana.[152] Let the Kurus be happy through the oppression of the evil one. O king! Purchase peacocks for this crow.[153] Purchase tigers for this jackal. Purchase the Pandavas and do not sink into this ocean of grief. 'For the sake of a family, a man should be sacrificed. For the sake of a village, a family should be sacrificed. For the sake of a country, a village should be

sacrificed. For the sake of the soul, the earth should be sacrificed.' Thus spoke Kavya, the omniscient one, knowledgeable in all sentiments and terrible to all enemies, when he asked the great asuras to abandon Jamba.[154]

'"O king! It is said that there were forest-dwelling birds that vomited gold. A man took them to live in his house, but then killed them out of greed.[155] O scorcher of enemies! He was blinded because of his temptation for gold. Because of his greed, he destroyed both what he had and what he could have had. O bull among the Bharatas! Do not oppress the Pandavas because of your immediate desire. You will later rue your delusion, like the man who killed the birds. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Like a maker of garlands, take flowers affectionately from the Pandavas one by one, as they flower. Like a maker of charcoal, do not burn down the roots of the tree. Do not go to your destruction with your sons, advisers and troops. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Who is capable of fighting with the Parthas when they stand together? O king! Not even the lord of the Maruts,[156] together with the Maruts."'

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'Vidura said, "Gambling is the root of all quarrels. Its consequence is dissension and great wars. Taking recourse to it, Duryodhana, Dhritarashtra's son, creates terrible enmity. Because of Duryodhana's crime, all the descendants of Pratipa[157] and Shantanu, together with their terrible armies and with the descendants of the Bahlikas, will be destroyed. Like an angry bull that breaks its own horns forcibly, Duryodhana's stupidity will drive safety away from this kingdom. O king! A brave and wise man who disregards his sagacity and follows another's mind, is like one who goes to the sea in a boat guided by a child and is immersed in terrible affliction. Duryodhana is gambling with Pandava and it pleases you because you think he is winning. But in this overdone deed is created a war that will lead to the destruction of all men. This badly designed act will lead to a decline in fruits. In the heart of the one who has

resorted to counsel, there is great composure.[158] Friendship with Yudhishthira will lead to good fruit. Through pacification, the one with the excellent bow[159] will no longer exhibit enmity. O descendants of Pratipa! O descendants of Shantanu! O kings! Listen to Kavya's words and do not cross the limits. The terrible fire has blazed forth. Extinguish it before there is a war. If Pandava Ajatashatru[160] is defeated in dice and his anger is not pacified by Vrikodara, Savyasachi and the twins, there will be no refuge in the terrible onslaught that will ensue. O great king! You are a source of great riches, as much as you desired, even before this game. Even if you win great riches from the Pandavas, what is the gain? Pritha's sons are the source of wealth. We all know Soubala's skills in the game. This one from the mountains[161] knows techniques of deceit with dice. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Let Shakuni return whence he came. The one from the mountains fights with the powers of maya."'

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'Duryodhana said, "O Kshatta! You always take pride in praising the fame of our enemies and secretly deprecate Dhritarashtra's sons. O Vidura! We know whom you are friends to. You always look down upon us, as if we are children. The man whose love is elsewhere is clearly revealed, from the way he distributes censure and praise. Your tongue reveals your heart and mind and that your mind is antagonistic. We embraced you like a serpent. Like a cat you injure the one by whom you are sustained. It is said there is no sin worse than killing one's protector. O Kshatta! How is it that you don't fear sin? Having vanquished our enemies, we have obtained great fruits. O Kshatta! Do not use harsh words against us. You always praise friendship with those who hate us and that is the reason you harbour hatred towards us. A man becomes an enemy by uttering unpardonable words. He secretly hides the praise for the enemies. How does shame not stop you? You are now speaking whatever you desire.[162] We know your mind, and do not disregard us. Learn from proximity with those who are

wise and old. O Vidura! Protect the fame you have earned so far. Do not concern yourself with the affairs of others. O Vidura! Do not deprecate us by mentioning your deeds. Do not always use such harsh words against us. O Vidura! I never ask you what you think. O Kshatta! Desist, because our patience is wearing down. There is one controller[163] and there is no second controller. That controller controls when a man is asleep in the womb. Through his control, like water flowing downwards, I flow in the direction appointed by him. He who uses his head to break a stone and he who feeds a serpent, are controlled in those deeds by his[164] instructions. He who wishes to control another by force only finds an enemy. A learned one looks up to those who act in friendship. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! If one lights a blazing fire and does not escape from it, even the remnants of ashes will not be found anywhere. O Kshatta! One should not give shelter to someone who hates and is from the enemy's party, especially if that man bears ill will. O Vidura! Therefore, go wherever you wish. However well treated, an unchaste wife will always leave."

'Vidura replied, "O king![165] He who gives to a man in this fashion, for him all friendship comes to an end. The minds of kings are always unsteady. After granting protection, they slay with clubs. O son of a king! You do not think yourself to be a child. O evil-minded one! You consider me to be a child. One, who has first accepted a man as a well-wisher and then reviles him, is the one who is a child. One with an evil mind never does that which brings welfare, like a corrupt woman in the house of a learned brahmana. That which is certain does not please this bull among the Bharatas, like a sixty-year-old husband to a young woman. O king! If you only wish to hear words that please you in all deeds, regardless of good or bad, ask the women, the dull and the crippled. Go ask those who are likewise stupid. O descendant of the Pratipa lineage! It is certainly easy to find a man who says things that please you. It is rare to find those who render unpleasant and right advice. He who sticks to the path of dharma and offers advice to his lord, regardless of whether it is pleasant or unpleasant, however unpleasant, is a true aide to the king. O great king!

Drink that which is healthy, bitter, pungent, hot, harsh, foul-smelling and revolting. This is what the good always drink and the evil refuse. Drink it and regain your calm. I always wish fame and prosperity to Vichitravirya's sons and their sons. Wherever you may be, I pay you my respects. May the brahmanas utter benedictions over me. O descendant of the Kuru lineage![166] I will carefully tell you this. Learned ones should never anger serpents that have venom in their eyes."'[167]

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'Shakuni said, "O Yudhisthira! You have lost great riches of the Pandavas. O Kounteya! Do you have any other riches that you have not lost yet?"

'Yudhishthira replied, "O Shakuni! O Soubala! I know of unlimited riches that I possess. Why do you ask me about my wealth? I can stake *ayuta*,[168] *prayuta*,[169] kharva,[170] *padma*,[171] arbuda,[172] *shamkha*,[173] *nikharva*[174] and an entire ocean.[175] O king! These are my riches that I will play with you for."'

Vaishampayana said, 'At these words, Shakuni resorted to deceit and told Yudhishthira, "I have won."

'Yudhishthira replied, "O Soubala! I have many cattle, horses, milch cows, sheep and goats, of many species, to the east of the Sindhu.[176] O king! These are my riches that I will play with you for."'

Vaishampayana said, 'At these words, Shakuni resorted to deceit and told Yudhishthira, "I have won."

'Yudhishthira replied, "O king! The riches that I have left are my city, the country, the land of all the non-brahmanas and the nonbrahmana subjects. O king! These are my riches that I will play with you for."'

Vaishampayana said, 'At these words, Shakuni resorted to deceit and told Yudhishthira, "I have won."

'Yudhisthira replied, "O king! These princes[177] are resplendent in their ornaments, their earrings, the golden decorations on their breasts and the

other bodily decorations. O king! These are my riches that I will play with you for."'

'Vaishampayana said, 'At these words, Shakuni resorted to deceit and told Yudhishthira, "I have won."

'Yudhishthira replied, "This dark youth with the red eyes is Nakula, with long arms and the shoulders of a lion. He and everything that he possesses will be one stake."

'Shakuni said, "O King Yudhisthira! But Prince Nakula is dear to you. If he becomes part of our riches, what will you have left to gamble with?"'

'Vaishampayana said, 'Having said this, Shakuni then flung the dice and told Yudhishthira, "I have won."

'Yudhishthira replied, "This Sahadeva is the one who administers dharma. He is known in the worlds as a learned one. Though this beloved prince does not deserve it, I will play with him with one who is not loved."'[178]

'Vaishampayana said, 'At these words, Shakuni resorted to deceit and told Yudhishthira, "I have won."

'Shakuni said, "O king! I have now won Madri's two sons, dear to you. But I think you regard Bhimasena and Dhananjaya as dearer."

'Yudhishthira replied, "O foolish one! Without regard to what is proper, you are following that which is not dharma. You are trying to create dissension among those who are one of heart."

'Shakuni said, "O king! O bull among the Bharata lineage! One who is intoxicated falls into a hole and remains there, like the trunk of a tree. You are our elder and our superior. I bow down before you. O Yudhishthira! When gamblers play, they utter mad ravings about what they have not seen, whether asleep or awake."

'Yudhishthira replied, "Like a boat, he carries us over to the other bank of battle. He is a powerful prince who defeats his enemies. The world knows that this warrior does not deserve it. O Shakuni! I will play with you for Phalguna."'[179]

Vaishampayana said, ‘At these words, Shakuni resorted to deceit and told Yudhishthira, “I have won.”

‘Shakuni said, “Pandava Savyasachi, the foremost archer among the Pandavas, has been won and has become mine. O king! Now play with your beloved Bhima. That is all you now have left to throw.”

‘Yudhishthira replied, “He is our leader and guide in battle. He is like the wielder of the vajra,[180] the enemy of the demons. He is great of soul, with slanted eyes and knitted brows. His shoulders are like those of a lion and his anger is long-lasting. There is no other man with strength like his. He is the slayer of enemies and foremost among those who wield the club. O king! Though this prince does not deserve it, I will play with you for Bhimasena.”’

Vaishampayana said, ‘At these words, Shakuni resorted to deceit and told Yudhishthira, “I have won.”

‘Shakuni said, “O Kounteya! You have lost a great deal of riches. You have lost your brothers, your horses and your elephants. Tell us if there are any riches that you have not yet lost.”

‘Yudhishthira replied, “I myself am left, especially loved by all my brothers. If won over, until the time of destruction, I will do whatever deed I am asked to do.”’

Vaishampayana said, ‘At these words, Shakuni resorted to deceit and told Yudhishthira, “I have won.”

‘Shakuni said, “O king! You have allowed yourself to be won and you have committed the worst evil act. When there are riches left, it is evil to allow oneself to be won.”’

Vaishampayana said, ‘Thus spoke the one who was skilled in gambling with the dice. He had won in the game, one by one, the brave warriors of the world.’

‘Shakuni said, “But you have your beloved queen, who has still not been won in the game. Use Krishna Panchali[181] as a stake and using her, win back yourself.”

‘Yudhishthira replied, “She is neither too short, nor too tall. She is neither too dark, nor too red. Her eyes are red with love and I will play with you for her. Her eyes are like the petals of lotuses in the autumn. Her fragrance is like that of lotuses in the autumn. Her beauty serves that of lotuses in the autumn. Her beauty is like that of Shri herself. Such is her lack of cruelty, her wealth of beauty and the goodness of her conduct, that every man desires her for a wife. She retires to bed last and she is the first one to wake up. She looks after the cowherds and the shepherds. She knows everything about what should be done and what should not be done. When covered with sweat, her face looks like a lotus or a jasmine. Her waist is shaped like an altar. Her hair is long. Her eyes are copper-red. She does not have too much of body hair. O king! O Soubala! I will make the beautiful Droupadi of Panchala, slender of waist, my stake. Let us play.”’

Vaishampayana said, ‘When the intelligent Dharmaraja uttered these words, all the elders assembled in the sabha raised words of “shame”. O king! The sabha seemed to shake and the kings talked among themselves. Bhishma, Drona, Kripa and the others broke out in sweat. Vidura buried his head in his hands and sat with a downcast face, thinking and sighing like a serpent, like one who has lost his senses. But Dhritarashtra was delighted and failing to control his emotions, repeatedly kept asking, “Has he won? Has the stake been won?” Karna, Duhshasana and their allies were happy. But tears began to flow down the eyes of others who were in the assembly hall. However, Soubala was insolent with success and proud of victory. He instantly flung the dice and said, “I have won.”’

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‘Duryodhana said, “O Kshatta! Bring Droupadi here, the beloved and honoured wife of the Pandavas. Let her sweep and perform our tasks. It will be good to see her with the serving girls.”

‘Vidura replied, “Through people like you, the impossible happens. O evil one! You do not know that you are tying yourself in a noose. You do not realize that you are extended over a precipice. You are only a deer, but you are angering tigers. O one who is greatly evil at heart! Angry serpents,

full of great venom, have raised themselves above your head. Do not anger them and go to Yama's abode. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Krishna[182] has not yet become a slave. The king[183] offered her as stake when he was no longer his master. A bamboo bears fruit only to kill itself.[184] This king, Dhritarashtra's son, also bears fruit. He does not see that gambling leads to fearful enmity and that he is ripe, like one about to meet his destiny. No one should cause hurt, or act cruelly. Nor should one extract from one who is miserable. Words that cause pain and hurt others should not be uttered, because they lead to hell. From his lips, a man utters words that hurt. The one stung by them burns night and day. Therefore, learned ones do not utter words that unleashed on another, pierce the depths of the heart. When a weapon could not be found, by pawing the ground, it is said that a goat dug up a weapon that was used to cut its own throat.[185] Therefore, do not dig up an enmity with the sons of Pandu. No one speaks ill of the forest-dweller or householder. But like dogs, the same men bark at the ascetic who is full of learning.[186] Dhritarashtra's son does not know the crooked and terrible door that leads to hell. Duhshasana and many others among the Kurus will follow him there, through the route of gambling. Gourds may sink[187] and stones may float. Boats may eternally be lost on the seas. But King Dhritarashtra's deluded son will not listen to my words, which are appropriate[188] for him. It is certain that this will be the end of the Kurus, a terrible end that will lead to everyone's destruction. The words of Kavya and his well-wishers were apt.[189] But because greed has expanded, they are no longer listened to."'

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Vaishampayana said, 'Dhritarashtra's son was insolent with pride. He said, "Kshatta be damned." In the midst of all the revered ones in the assembly hall, he looked at the attendant and said, "O Pratikamin![190] Go and bring Droupadi here. You have no reason to fear the Pandavas. It is only Kshatta who is scared and speaks to the contrary. But he never wishes that our

prosperity should increase." Having heard the words of the king, the suta attendant[191] swiftly departed and went to the queen of the Pandavas, like a dog entering a lion's lair.

'The attendant said, "O Droupadi! Yudhishthira was intoxicated by gambling and has lost you to Duryodhana. O Yajnaseni! Now come to Dhritarashtra's house. I must take you for the tasks you have to perform." Droupadi replied, "O Pratikamin! How can you speak like this? Can any prince stake his wife in a gamble? The king must have been deluded in his intoxication for the game. Could he not find anything else for the stake?" The attendant said, "Pandava Ajatashatru offered you as stake when there was nothing left as stake. The king had earlier staked his brothers and then himself. O Princess! He next staked you." Droupadi replied, "O son of a suta! Go back to the assembly hall and ask that gambler from the Bharata lineage whether he first lost himself or me. O son of a suta! After having found this out, come back to me." He went to the assembly hall and repeated Droupadi's words. "Droupadi wants to know, 'Whose lord were you when you lost me? Did you lose yourself first or me?'" Yudhishthira sat there unmoved, like one who has lost his senses. He did not reply to the suta, in words that were either good or bad. Duryodhana said, "Let Panchali Krishna come here and ask the question herself. Let everyone in the sabha hear what they have to say to each other." The attendant was in Duryodhana's service and went to the king's house.[192] Though miserable, the suta told Droupadi, "O Princess! Those in the assembly hall are summoning you. It seems to me that the destruction of the Kurus is near. O Princess! Since that weak-minded one[193] wants you in the sabha, he will no longer be able to protect our prosperity." Droupadi replied, "The one who determines everything has destined thus. Both the young and the old are touched thus. It has been said that dharma is supreme in the worlds. If it is sustained, peace will be brought." O bull among the Bharata lineage! On hearing of Duryodhana's intentions, Yudhishthira sent a trusted messenger to Droupadi.[194] Panchali was going through her menses then. She was weeping and clad in a single garment tied below the navel, she

went to the sabha and stood before her father-in-law.[195] Looking at the faces of the assembly, King Duryodhana delightedly told the suta,[196] "O Pratikamin! Bring her here. Let her be in front of us, so that the Kouravas can speak to her." The suta was in his[197] servitude, but was scared of the wrath of Drupada's daughter. Giving up his pride, he told the assembly, "How can I speak to Krishna?" Duryodhana said, "O Duhshasana! This son of a suta has limited intelligence. He is frightened of Vrikodara. Go and bring Yajnaseni here yourself. Our rivals are now under our control. They can do nothing." Having heard his brother, the prince[198] arose. His eyes were red with anger. He entered the house of those maharathas and told Princess Droupadi, "O Panchali! O Krishna! You have been won by us. Look upon Duryodhana without any shame. O one with eyes like long lotus petals! You will now love the Kurus. You have been won in accordance with dharma. Come to the sabha." She arose in great distress and wiped her pale face with her hands. In distress, she ran to where the aged king's,[199] who was a bull among the Kurus, women were. Swiftly the angry Duhshasana rushed at her, letting out a great roar. The long, blue and flowing hair belonged to the wife of a lord of men and was now grabbed by him. At the time of the great rajasuya sacrifice, the hair had been sprinkled with auspicious waters. The valour of the Pandavas was vanquished and Dhritarashtra's son[200] grabbed it with force. She had protectors, but was without a protector. Grabbing her by her long hair, Duhshasana pulled and dragged her to the sabha, like a plantain tree buffeted by the wind. When she was thus dragged, she bent down her body and softly whispered, "It is the period of my menses now. O evil-minded one! I am only clad in a single garment. O you who are not an arya! Do not take me to the sabha thus." But he forcibly grabbed her by her black hair and told Krishna, "Pray to Krishna and Jishnu and Hari and Nara.[201] Cry out for help, but I will take you. O Yajnaseni! This may be the time of your menses. But whether you are clad in a single garment or in no garments at all, you have been won at the game and are now a slave. One can sport

with a slave as one desires." Her hair was dishevelled. As she was pulled around by Duhshasana, her half-garment had come loose. She burnt with shame and mortification. In a soft voice, Krishna whispered again, "There are those in the assembly hall who are learned in the sacred texts. They follow all the righteous rites and are all like Indra. All of them are my preceptors or like them. I cannot stand before them in this fashion. O performer of evil deeds! O you who act as if you are not an arya! Do not strip me and do not debase me in this fashion. Even if all the gods with Indra become your allies, these princes[202] will not pardon you. The great-souled son of Dharma[203] always bases himself in dharma. The ways of dharma are subtle and only the skilled can discern this. But despite the words of my lord,[204] I will not commit even a tiny offence or deviate from my own qualities. You are performing a most unworthy act by dragging me among the Kuru warriors when I am in my menses. There is no one here who will praise you for that, though there is no doubt that they have the same inclinations as you. Shame! The descendants of the Bharata lineage have lost their dharma and their knowledge of the ways of kshatriyas. All the Kurus in this sabha have witnessed the transgression of the dharma of the Kurus. There is certainly no longer substance in Drona, Bhishma and in this great-souled one.[205] The foremost among the elders of the Kuru lineage have chosen to ignore this terrible transgression of dharma by the king." The slender-waisted one thus piteously cried out and cast a scornful and sidelong glance at her angry husbands. The Pandavas were inflamed by that sidelong glance and their bodies were filled with wrath. They didn't suffer that much from the loss of the kingdom, or the riches, or the chief jewels, as they did from Krishna's sidelong, angry and miserable glance. On seeing Krishna look at her miserable husbands, Duhshasana dragged her with even greater force, so that she almost lost her senses. He repeatedly called her "slave" and laughed uproariously. Karna was delighted at these words and approved of them by laughing out loudly. In similar fashion, Soubala, the king of Gandhara, applauded Duhshasana's deed. Among all those who were present in the assembly

hall, with the exception of these and Dhritarashtra's son,[206] everyone was extremely miserable on seeing Krishna thus dragged into the sabha. Bhishma said, "O fortunate one! Since the ways of dharma are subtle, I cannot properly resolve the question you have posed. One without property cannot stake the property of others. But women are always the property of their husbands. Yudhishthira will abandon the entire earth with its riches before he gives up truth. The Pandava has himself said he has been won. Therefore, I cannot resolve this issue. Shakuni has no equal in dice. Kunti's son has voluntarily played with him. The great-souled one does not think he[207] has resorted to deceit. Therefore, I cannot answer the question." Droupadi replied, "Though he is himself unskilled, the king was challenged in this sabha by those who are skilled, evil-minded and deceitful, those who love the game of dice. How can it be said he chose voluntarily? The pure-hearted and foremost one among the Kurus and the Pandavas was robbed of his senses by inclinations towards deceit. He has understood everything only after he has been won and after the gambling is over. In this assembly hall are Kurus who are the lords of their sons and daughters-in-law. Let all of them examine my words and answer my question in the appropriate way." Thus spoke the one who was miserable and weeping, while glancing at her miserable husbands. Duhshasana spoke many harsh, unpleasant and rude words to her. Vrikodara watched her being dragged, while she was in her menses and with her upper garments dishevelled. She did not deserve this. In extreme distress, he uttered words of anger to Yudhishthira.'

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'Bhima said, "O Yudhishthira! Gamblers have many courtesans in their country. But they are kind even towards those, and do not stake them in gambling. In the gamble, we have lost to our enemies the riches and other excellent objects that the King of Kashi brought, the gems and other gifts that the other lords of the earth brought, mounts, riches, armour, weapons, the kingdom and even ourselves. Because you are our lord, my anger was

not excited at all this. But I think you committed a most improper act in staking Droupadi. She did not deserve this. After obtaining the Pandavas, this maiden is suffering this despicable and cruel oppression from the Kouravas only because of your act. O king! It is because of her that my anger descends on you. I will burn your hands. O Sahadeva! Bring the fire."[208]

'Arjuna said, "O Bhimasena! Never before have you uttered words like these. The cruel enemies have destroyed your pride in dharma. You should not make the desires of the enemy come true. Observe the supreme dharma. According to dharma, one should never cross one's elder brother. The king was challenged and he followed the dharma of the kshatriyas. He gambled because of the desires of the enemy. That is our great deed."

'Bhimasena replied, "O Dhananjaya! Had I not known that he has not done it for himself, I would forcibly have grasped his hands and burnt them in the blazing fire."'

Vaishampayana said, 'On seeing the Pandavas thus miserable and Panchali's affliction, Dhritarashtra's son Vikarna spoke these words.[209] "O kings! Answer the question posed by Yajnaseni. If we do not decide on the question, we will certainly go to hell. Bhishma and Dhritarashtra, the eldest among the Kurus, are here, but they do not say anything. Nor does the extremely intelligent Vidura. Nor does Bharadvaja's son,[210] the preceptor to all of us. Nor does Kripa. Why don't these best among brahmanas answer the question? The lords of the earth have assembled here from all the directions. Let them forget their desire and their anger and speak according to their own thoughts. O kings! Reflect on the question that the beautiful Droupadi has repeatedly asked. Then answer as to which side of the issue you are on." Thus did Vikarna repeatedly speak to all those who were present in the assembly hall. But none of the lords of the earth present said anything, good or bad. Vikarna again spoke to all those lords of the earth. He rubbed his hands against each other, sighed and said, "O lords of the earth! O Kouravas! Whether you say anything or not, I will tell you what I think is right. O best of men! It has been said

that addiction to hunting, drinking, gambling and sexual intercourse are the four vices of kings. The man who is addicted to these deviates from dharma and the world does not approve of these improper deeds. This son of Pandu[211] was addicted to vice and challenged by deceitful gamblers, staked Droupadi. The unblemished one is common to all the Pandavas. Having first lost himself, the Pandava offered her as stake. Soubala, desirous of a stake, suggested Krishna. Reflecting on all these, I do not think she has been won." On hearing these words, a great roar arose from all those who were in the sabha. They approved of Vikarna and censured Soubala. When the noise died down, Radheya, who was almost senseless with anger, gripped his lustrous arms[212] and uttered these words, "I have witnessed many distortions in Vikarna. Like fire destroys the block from which it has been kindled, his destruction will come from the fire he has created. Though urged by Krishna, those who are assembled here have not uttered a word. I consider that Drupada's daughter has been won in accordance with dharma, and so do they. O son of Dhritarashtra! Out of childishness, you alone are being torn to bits. Though but a child, you speak in this sabha what should be spoken by elders. O Duryodhana's younger brother! You do not know the reality of what dharma is. Like one with limited intelligence, you proclaim that Krishna has not been won, when she has been won. O Dhritarashtra's son! How can you think that Krishna has not been won? In this sabha, the eldest Pandava staked everything he possessed. O bull among the Bharata lineage! Droupadi is included in all his possessions. When Krishna has been won in accordance with dharma, how can you think she has not been won? Droupadi was mentioned in the speech and the Pandava approved. According to what reason do you then think that she has not been won? If you think that bringing her into the sabha when she is clad in only a single garment is against dharma, listen to the words I have to say in response. O descendant of the Kuru lineage![213] It has been ordained by the gods that a woman should only have one husband. However, she submits to many and it is therefore certain that she is a courtesan. It is my view that there is nothing

surprising in her being brought into the sabha in a single garment, or even if she is naked. In accordance with dharma, Soubala has won all the riches the Pandavas possessed, including her and themselves. O Duhshasana! This Vikarna is only a child, though he speaks words of wisdom. Strip away the garments from the Pandavas and Droupadi." O descendant of the Bharata lineage! On hearing these words, the Pandavas took off their upper garments and sat down in the sabha. O king! Then Duhshasana forcibly tugged at Droupadi's garments. In front of everyone in the sabha, he forcibly pulled. O lord of the earth! As Droupadi's garment was being tugged away, another similar garment appeared every time.[214] At this, a terrible uproar arose. All the assembled kings witnessed the most extraordinary sight in the worlds and approved. In the midst of the kings, Bhima then kneaded his hands. His lips trembling with rage, he cursed in a loud voice, "O kshatriyas! O those who live in this world! Hear these words of mine, never before uttered by any man and never to be uttered in the future. O lords of the earth! Having uttered these words, if I do not act accordingly, may I never tread on the path followed by my forefathers. In battle, I will forcibly tear asunder the breast of this evil and misguided one,[215] wretch among the Bharatas, and drink his blood." On hearing these words, all the worlds were delighted. They worshipped him a lot and reviled Dhritarashtra's son. When that mass of garments was piled up in the middle of the sabha, Duhshasana became tired and ashamed and finally sat down. On seeing the sons of Kunti in that state, all the gods and men in the sabha raised cries of "shame", so that the hair on the body stood up. The people shouted, "The Kouravas do not answer the question," and censured Dhritarashtra. Then Vidura, learned in all the ways of dharma, raised his arms and silenced those who were in the assembly hall. He spoke these words, "Having raised the question, Droupadi now weeps, like one without a protector. If those who are in the sabha do not answer the question, dharma will be oppressed. Like a blazing fire, one in distress comes to this sabha. Those who are in the sabha pacify him through true dharma. When a man in distress asks a question about dharma, those in the

sabha must answer that question, without being driven by desire or anger. O lords of men! Vikarna has answered the question in accordance with what he thinks. You should also answer the question as you deem fit. If one seated in the assembly hall does not answer the question, even though he knows about dharma, he incurs half the demerit that comes from lying. And if one is seated in the assembly hall and answers the question falsely, even though he knows about dharma, he certainly incurs the complete demerit that comes from lying. In this context, the learned ones quote the ancient conversation that took place between Prahlada and the sage who was the son of Angirasa."

'Vidura said, "Prahlada was the king of the daityas and his son was Virochana. For the sake of a maiden, he[216] quarrelled with Sudhanva, the son of Angirasa. We have heard that out of desire for the maiden, they wagered their lives, each claiming that he was superior. When they were thus debating, they asked Prahlada, 'Who among us is superior? Answer the question and do not lie.' He was scared of this dispute and looked at Sudhanva. As flaming as the curse of a brahmana, Sudhanva angrily told him, 'O Prahlada! If you utter a lie or if you do not answer at all, the wielder of the vajra will use the vajra to splinter your head into a hundred parts.' When Sudhanva spoke these words, the daitya trembled like the leaf of a fig tree.[217] He went to the immensely energetic Kashyapa to consult him. Prahlada said, 'O illustrious one! You are learned in the ways of dharma, for the gods, the demons and the brahmanas. Listen to this problem and tell me what dharma is. Please tell me, because I am asking you. In the hereafter, what worlds are attained by one who does not answer a question or answers it falsely?' Kashyapa answered, 'He who knows the answer to a question but does not answer it out of desire, anger or fear, brings upon himself a thousand of Varuna's nooses. It takes an entire year for one of these nooses to be loosened. Therefore, one who knows the truth should speak the truth openly. When dharma is pierced with what is not dharma and goes to a sabha and those who are in the assembly hall do not take out the dart, it will pierce them. In a sabha where an act of censure is

not condemned, half the demerit is attached to the head of that assembly, one fourth to the culprit and one fourth to those who do not condemn it. On the other hand, in a sabha where an act of censure is condemned, the head is free of sin and so are the ones assembled there, and demerit descends on the perpetrator. O Prahlada! Those who answer falsely to a question asked about dharma, destroy the merits of good deeds for seven generations of ancestors and seven generations of descendants. The grief of one whose property has been stolen, whose son has been killed, who has lost all in debt, who has been extorted by a king, or of a woman who has no husband, or of one distanced from his companions, or the misery of a co-wife, or of one deprived because of witnesses[218]—the lord of the thirty gods[219] has declared these miseries to be equal. He who speaks falsely obtains all these miseries. One becomes a witness because of what he has directly seen, heard or understood. Therefore, a witness who speaks the truth never deviates from dharma and artha.' Having heard Kashyapa's words, Prahlada spoke to his son. 'Sudhanva is superior to you, just as Angirasa is superior to me. Sudhanva's mother is superior to your mother. O Virochana! Sudhanva is the lord of your life.' Sudhanva replied, 'Since you have not deviated from dharma out of affection towards your son, I set your son free and he will live for a hundred years.' Hearing this about supreme dharma, let all those who are in this sabha reflect upon the supreme answer to Krishna's question."'

Vaishampayana said, 'On hearing Vidura's words, none of the kings uttered a single word. Karna told Duhshasana, "Take Krishna away to the quarters meant for the servant girls." The ascetic lady[220] was trembling, in shame and complained to the Pandavas, when Duhshasana dragged her in the middle of the sabha.'

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'Droupadi said, "I have a duty to perform, an act that I had not performed earlier, because dragged through the force of this powerful one, I had lost

my senses. I offer my homage to all my superiors who are in this assembly of Kurus. Let it not be my crime that I have not done this before."'

Vaishampayana said, 'Dragged with even greater force, the ascetic lady was even more miserable. She did not deserve this. She fell down on the ground and lamented in the sabha.

'Droupadi said, "The assembled kings set their eyes on me in the arena of the svayamvara. Until being brought to this sabha, I have never been seen by anyone since, anywhere. One who has earlier not seen the wind or the sun in her house, has today been seen by this assembly of Kurus in the middle of the sabha. Earlier, the Pandavas have not allowed the wind to touch me in my house. They now bear it when I am touched by this evil-hearted one. Time has deviated. The Kurus permit their daughter and daughter-in-law, unworthy of such treatment, to be thus oppressed. Earlier, it has been heard that pure and chaste wives are not brought into the middle of a sabha. Where is the dharma of the lords of the earth? According to dharma, it has earlier been heard that wives are not brought into an assembly hall. That earlier eternal dharma has been lost among the Kouravas. How is it that the chaste wife of the Pandus, the sister of Parshata's son[221] and a friend to Vasudeva, has been brought into this assembly of kings? O Kouravas! I am Dharmaraja's wife and I was born in the same varna as he. Tell me whether I am a slave or not a slave, and I will act accordingly. O Kouravas! This mean one, the bringer of ill repute to the Kouravas, is firmly molesting me and I cannot bear it any longer. O kings! O Kouravas! I want you to answer, whatever you might think, and I will act accordingly. Have I been won or have I not been won?"

'Bhishma replied, "O fortunate one! I have already said that the course of dharma is supreme. Even the great-souled brahmanas in this world are incapable of comprehending its course. When a powerful man uses force, that is perceived as dharma by the world. But if a feeble one speaks about dharma, that is not regarded as dharma by others. I am incapable of answering your question certainly. The issue is subtle, deep, complicated and important. It is certain that all the Kurus have become addicted to avarice and delusion. Without a doubt, the destruction of the lineage will

occur soon. O fortunate one! The lineage into which you have been born and the one in which you are established as a daughter-in-law, never deviates from the path of dharma, regardless of the disaster that might befall. O Panchali! Since you look at dharma, even though you are suffering, it is conduct that you yourself follow. Drona and the other elders, knowledgeable in dharma, sit here with lowered heads, as if their bodies are hollow.[222] It is my view that Yudhishthira is the supreme authority on the question. He should himself say whether you have been won or have not been won."'

Vaishampayana said, 'The kings who were there were scared of Dhritarashtra's son. They said nothing, good or bad, though they witnessed these many events and saw her crying, like a female osprey that has been hurt. On seeing that the sons and grandsons of the kings were silent, Dhritarashtra's son[223] smiled and spoke these words to the daughter of the king of Panchala, "O Yajnaseni! Let the question now be placed before the immensely powerful Bhima, Arjuna, Sahadeva and your husband Nakula. Let them reply to your words. O Panchali! Let them declare before all these aryas that Yudhishthira is not your lord. They must establish Dharmaraja as a liar.[224] You will then be freed from servitude. The great-souled son of Dharma is always established in dharma. He is the equal of Indra. Let him himself declare whether he is your lord or not. When he has spoken, you must quickly decide whom to love. All the Kouravas who are in this sabha are immersed in your affliction. Though they are aryas at heart, they cannot appropriately resolve the issue. They therefore look to your husbands for an answer." Hearing these words of the king of the Kurus, all those who were present in the assembly loudly applauded him. Some happily waved their garments. But sounds of "alas" were also heard. On hearing these pleasant words, all the kings in the assembly applauded the righteous act of the foremost among the Kurus. Turning their faces, all the kings looked at Yudhishthira. He was learned in the principles of dharma. What would he say? What would Bibhatsu, the Pandava who was undefeated in battle, say? What would Bhimasena and the twins say? They

were curious and wondered. When the noise had died down, Bhimasena grasped his large arms, smeared with sandalwood paste, and spoke. “Had Dharmaraja Yudhishthira not been our superior and had he not been our lord of our lineage, we would not have tolerated this. He owns the merit of our austerities and he is even the lord of our lives. If he considers himself to have been won, then all of us have been won. But for that, no one who walks the ground of the earth with his feet would have escaped with his life after touching Panchali’s hair. Look at my long and round arms, like iron clubs. Once inside them, not even Shatakratu can escape. But bound in the noose of dharma, out of respect for him[225] and restrained by Arjuna, I am not doing anything dreadful. If I am once freed by Dharmaraja, I will make my arms perform the act of swords and kill these evil sons of Dhritarashtra, the way a lion kills small animals.” At that, Bhishma, Drona and Vidura spoke and said, “Restrain yourself. With you, everything is possible.”’

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‘Karna said, “There are three who can own no property—a slave, a student and a woman. O fortunate one! You are the wife of a slave and have nothing of your own. You have no lord and are like the property of slaves. Enter[226] and serve us. That is the task for you in this household. O Princess! All the sons of Dhritarashtra are now your masters and not the sons of Pritha. O beautiful one! Choose another one for your husband, one who will not make you a slave through gambling. Remember the eternal rule among slaves. Sexual acts with one’s masters are never censured. Nakula, Bhimasena, Yudhishthira, Sahadeva and Arjuna have been won over. O Yajnaseni! Enter as a slave. The ones who have been won over can no longer be your husbands. Valour and virility are of no use to Partha[227] now. In the middle of the sabha, he has gambled away the daughter of Drupada, the king of Panchala.”’

Vaishampayana said, ‘On hearing these words, Bhimasena couldn’t bear it any more. Like a man tormented, he breathed deeply. But he was

devoted to the king[228] and tied down in the noose of dharma. He tried to burn him[229] down with the anger in his eye. Bhima said, “I cannot be angry at the words of the son of a suta.[230] It is truly the case that the dharma of slaves is upon us. O lord of men![231] Our enemies would not have dared hold me down, had you not staked her.” Hearing Radheya’s words, King Duryodhana then spoke to Yudhishthira, who sat silent, as if he had lost his senses. “O king! Bhima, Arjuna and the twins always follow your instructions. Answer the question as to whether you think Krishna has been won.” Having thus spoken to Kounteya, he became insolent with arrogance. He looked invitingly at Panchali and grasped his garment. Smiling at Radheya and tormenting Bhima, he exposed his left thigh to Droupadi, who was looking at him.[232] It was like the stem of a plantain tree, like the trunk of an elephant, as proud as the vajra and was marked with all the auspicious signs. On witnessing this, Vrikodara enlarged his red eyes. Among all the kings in the sabha, he spoke to them in compelling words. “If he fails to break that thigh with a club in a great battle, let Vrikodara not go to the worlds where his ancestors have gone.” When he was thus enraged, sparks of fire issued out of every opening in his body, as if from the hollow of a tree that is on fire.

‘Vidura said, “O kings! Look out for the extreme danger that emanates from Bhimasena. Watch, for this is like Varuna’s noose. The great calamity that the gods had destined for the descendants of the Bharata lineage in ancient times, has come to pass. Dhritarashtra’s sons have transgressed in gambling. They are now quarrelling about a lady in a sabha. There is great danger to what you have already obtained and what you wish to obtain.[233] The counsel of the Kurus is now based on evil advice. O Kurus! Know this to be dharma. If it is wrongly diagnosed, this entire assembly will be tainted. If this gambler had staked her before, he would not have been won and would have still been her master. But if a man puts up a stake when he is not the lord of anything, winning that stake is like obtaining riches in a

dream. O Kurus! You have listened to Gandhari's son![234] But do not deviate from the path of dharma."

'Duryodhana responded, "I am willing to abide by Bhima's words, Arjuna's words and the words of the twins. O Yanjanseni! If they say that Yudhishthira wasn't their lord, then you will be freed from slavery."

'Arjuna said, "This great-souled King Dharmaraja, Kunti's son, was certainly our master when he first played with us as stake. But whose lord was he, once he had lost himself? O assembled Kurus! All of you should decide that."'

Vaishampayana said, 'At that time, in King Dhritarashtra's house, a jackal cried at the agnihotra.[235] O king! Donkeys brayed in response and from every direction, terrible birds joined in. Vidura, who was knowledgeable in everything, heard these terrible sounds, and so did Subala's daughter.[236] Bhishma, Drona and the learned Goutama[237] heard and said, "Peace! Peace!" On hearing those terrible omens, Gandhari and the learned Vidura became miserable and told the king.[238] Then the king spoke these words. "O evil-minded Duryodhana! You have been destroyed. In this assembly hall of the bulls among the Kurus, in this sabha, you have used insolent words against a woman, especially a lawfully wedded wife like Droupadi." Having spoken these words, the intelligent Dhritarashtra stopped, for he was concerned about the welfare of his relatives. Using his knowledge and intelligence, he spoke these words, so as to pacify Krishna Panchali.

'Dhritarashtra said, "O Panchali! Choose from me whatever boon you desire. You are a chaste lady who follows supreme dharma and you are the most special of my daughters-in-law."

'Droupadi replied, "O bull among the Bharata lineage! If you wish to grant me a boon, I will choose this. The illustrious Yudhishthira, who follows all the ways of dharma, should not be a slave. Let these young boys, who do not know of Prativindhya's[239] intelligence, refer to him as the son of a slave when he arrives. He has been the son of a king earlier,

like no man anywhere and ever. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! He will die if he is brought up as the son of a slave."

'Dhritarashtra said, "O fortunate one! Ask for a second boon from me and I will grant it to you. My heart has convinced me that you do not deserve to obtain only a single boon."

'Droupadi replied, "With my second boon, I desire that Bhimasena, Dhananjaya, Nakula and Sahadeva, together with their chariots and their bows, should not be slaves."

'Dhritarashtra said, "O one who always follows the path of righteousness! Two boons do not honour you enough. Ask for a third. You are the best among all my daughters-in-law."

'Droupadi replied, "O illustrious one! Avarice destroys dharma and I am disinclined. O supreme among kings! I am not deserving of a third boon from you. It is said that the vaishya has one boon and a kshatriya and his wife can have two. O Indra among kings! A king can have three boons and a brahmana one hundred. O king! My husbands were reduced to an evil state, but have been rescued. They will obtain riches and prosperity through their own sacred deeds."'

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'Karna said, "Among all women in humankind, renowned for their beauty, we have not seen, nor heard, of the accomplishment of such a deed. When the sons of Pritha and the sons of Dhritarashtra were raging in anger, Krishna Droupadi brought solace. The sons of Pandu were immersed and drowning in an ocean without a boat. Panchali became their boat and brought them safely ashore."'

Vaishampayana said, 'Having heard the words that a woman had become the salvation for the sons of Pandu, Bhimasena was extremely hurt. In the midst of the Kurus, he said unhappily, "Devala[240] has said that there are three stars[241] for a man—offspring, deeds and learning, since these are the source of creation. When the body has lost life and is hollow and impure, discarded by relatives, these are the three that survive. But our

light has become dark, because our wife has been humiliated. O Dhananjaya! How can offspring from a defiled one serve any purpose?" Arjuna replied, "The Bharatas do not talk about words from inferior men, uttered or not uttered. They only converse about those from superior men. They remember good deeds and not enmity that has been shown. They know only the good because they have confidence in their own selves." Bhima said, "Right now, I will kill all the enemies who have assembled here. O Indra among kings![242] O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Shall I tear them up by their roots? O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Where is the need to debate this or suffer? Here and now, I am going to kill all of them and you can rule the earth without a rival." Having said this, Bhimasena, surrounded by his younger brothers, glanced at his club, like a lion in the midst of deer. Partha,[243] whose deeds are unblemished, pacified him and cooled him. But the mighty-armed and valorous one streamed with anger. O lord of men! He was so angry that smoke, sparks and flaming fire issued from his ears and other openings in his body. His brows were furrowed and his face was terrible to behold, like Yama's form when destruction at the end of a yuga is near. 'O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Yudhishthira restrained the mighty-armed one with his arms. He told him not to act in this way and to be quiet. Having restrained the mighty-armed one, whose eyes were red with anger, Yudhishthira approached his father Dhritarashtra, his hands joined in salutation.'

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'Yudhishthira said, "O king! You are our lord. Command us as to what we should do. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! We have always desired to be established under your rule."

'Dhritarashtra replied, "O Ajatashatru! Be fortunate. Go in peace and safety. On my instructions, rule your kingdom with your riches. But bear in mind the instructions that I, an old man, am giving. I have reflected on this and it is the supreme medication[244] for welfare. O Yudhishthira! O son! You know the subtle path of dharma. You are humble, immensely

wise and serve your superiors. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Where there is intelligence, there is peace. Therefore, tread the path of serenity. A weapon does not cut what is not wood. But it does cut wood. Supreme men do not indulge in hostilities. They do not know enmity and see good qualities, leaving out bad qualities. O Yudhishthira! It is only the worst among men who use harsh words in a quarrel. Those who are average reply to such words, but the supreme among men never respond. Supreme men never converse about ill words, whether they are uttered or not uttered by inferior men.[245] They only remember good deeds and not deeds resulting from enmity. They only know the good because they have confidence in their own selves. In this assembly of good people, you have shown the character of an arya. O son! Do not take to your heart Duryodhana's harshness. Look at your mother Gandhari and me. We crave for your good qualities. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Look at your old and blind father present before you. I wished to see my friends and judge the strengths and weaknesses of my sons. It was from this desire that I had earlier allowed the gambling match to take place. O king! There is no reason to feel sorry for the Kurus whom you rule. The intelligent Vidura, knowledgeable in all the sacred texts, is your adviser. There is dharma in you, valour in Arjuna, strength in Bhimasena and respect and service towards superior in the twins, foremost among men. O Ajatashatru! Be fortunate. Return to Khandavaprastha. Let there be fraternal love with your brothers.[246] May your mind always be established in dharma.'''

Vaishampayana said, 'Hearing these words, Dharmaraja Yudhishthira, supreme among those of the Bharata lineage, performed all the deeds that were appropriate for the occasion and left with his brothers. With Krishna,[247] they left in chariots that were like the clouds. In a happy frame of mind, they left for Indraprastha, supreme among cities.'

Section Twenty-Eight

Anudyuta Parva

This sections has 232 shlokas and seven chapters.

Chapter 291(66): 37 shlokas
Chapter 292(67): 21 shlokas
Chapter 293(68): 46 shlokas
Chapter 294(69): 21 shlokas
Chapter 295(70): 24 shlokas
Chapter 296(71): 47 shlokas
Chapter 297(72): 36 shlokas

As has been mentioned in the earlier section, the word dyuta means playing or gambling with dice, and also the resultant prize. The word anu *means after, behind, or in consequence of. So this section is about the aftermath of the gambling match.*

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Janamejaya asked, 'When they learnt that the Pandavas had been granted permission to leave with their gems, riches and treasures, what was the state of mind of Dhritarashtra's sons?'

Vaishampayana said, 'O king! When he found out that the intelligent Dhritarashtra had given the permission, Duhshasana swiftly went to his brother.[1] O bull among the Bharata lineage! On arriving before Duryodhana and his advisers, the foremost of the Bharatas[2] spoke these miserable words, "O maharathas! That old man has made us lose everything that we had obtained with great difficulty. He has given those objects to our enemies." Then the proud Duryodhana, Karna and Soubala

Shakuni got together and plotted against the Pandavas. They went to the intelligent King Dhritarashtra, Vichitravirya's son, and spoke to him these conciliatory words.

'Duryodhana said, "O king! Have you not heard what Brihaspati, the learned priest of the gods, told Shakra about policy? 'O destroyer of enemies! Enemies must be killed through every means possible, before they cause harm through war or force.'[3] We should offer homage to all the kings through riches obtained from the Pandavas. If we fight with them[4] thereafter, what reversal can befall us? If one places angry and venomous snakes that bring destruction on one's back and neck, how can one get rid of them? O father! The angry Pandavas will ride on chariots and hold their weapons. In their rage, they will destroy us like venomous serpents. Arjuna is attired in armour and has grasped his two supreme quivers. He is frequently picking up the Gandiva, breathing heavily and glancing around. We have heard that Vrikodara has swiftly raised his giant club and is riding on a chariot that has been yoked. Nakula has his sword and the shield marked with the signs of eight moons. Sahadeva and the king[5] have made their intentions clear through their gestures. They have ascended chariots that are stocked with many different kinds of arms. They have whipped up the teams of chariots and are ready to employ armies. We have caused them offence and they will not pardon us. Who among them will forgive Droupadi's oppression? O bull among the Bharata lineage! Be fortunate. We must again gamble with the Pandavas so as to send them to the forest. In this way, we will be able to bring them under our sway. Either they or we will be defeated in the gambling with dice and attired in deerskin, will enter the great forest for twelve years. The thirteenth year will have to be spent in an inhabited place, in disguise. If one is recognized, one will again have to go to the forest for twelve years. Either they or we will live here. Therefore, let the gamble begin. Let the dice be thrown again and let the Pandavas play. O king! O bull among the Bharata lineage! This is the most important task for us. This Shakuni is skilled and possesses all the knowledge about the secrets of dice. We will be firmly established in the

kingdom and will have alliances. We will gather a vast, brave and invincible army and keep it content. O king! O scorcher of enemies! If they survive the vow after thirteen years, we will be able to defeat them. Let this find pleasure with you."

'Dhritarashtra replied, "Then immediately bring them back, even if they have gone a long distance away. Let the Pandavas return and gamble with the dice again."'

Vaishampayana said, 'Then Drona, Somadatta, the maharatha Bahlika, Vidura, Drona's son,[6] the valorous son of the vaishya,[7] Bhurishrava, Shantanu's son[8] and maharatha Vikarna collectively said, "Don't have the gamble. Let there be peace." But Dhritarashtra loved his son and ignored the desires of these well-wishers, all of whom could foresee the consequences. He summoned the Pandavas. O great king! Gandhari was always united with dharma. She was miserable because of affection towards her sons and spoke to Dhritarashtra, lord of the people. "When Duryodhana was born, the immensely intelligent Kshatta[9] told us that it would be better to send this destroyer of the lineage to the other world. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! As soon as he was born, he howled like a jackal. O Kurus! Listen to this. He will be the destroyer of the lineage. O lord! Do not listen to the views of these wicked ones who are nothing but children. Do not become the cause for the terrible destruction of the lineage. Who will breach a dam[10] that has been constructed? Who will rekindle a dying fire? O descendant of the Bharata lineage! The sons of Pritha are now established in peace. Who would want to anger them? O Ajamidha![11] You remember, but I am reminding you again. Either in good or in evil deeds, the sacred texts cannot instruct those who are evil in intelligence. O king! Nor will one with the intelligence of a child ever attain the wisdom of age. You should yourself be the leader to your sons. Let them not be torn apart from you. Let peace, dharma, the counsel of others and natural intelligence be your principles in framing policy. Prosperity built through cruelty is destroyed. If it is gently nurtured, it grows old and passes to sons and grandsons." Having been thus addressed

by Gandhari, who had seen the way of dharma, the great king replied, “It is certain that if the destruction of our lineage has come, I will not be able to prevent it. Let it be as they wish. Let the Pandavas return. Let those who are mine gamble again with the Pandavas.”’

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Vaishampayana said, ‘On the intelligent King Dhritarashtra’s command, a Pratikamin spoke to Partha Yudhishthira, who had already gone a long distance away. “O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Your father has said that the sabha has been covered with carpets. O king! O Pandava! The dice are ready. Come and play.” Yudhishthira replied, “Following the decisions of the creator, all beings attain good and evil. Even if I do not play again, neither can be prevented. This summon to gamble with the dice is the old one’s[12] command. Though I know that it will lead to ruin, I cannot disobey the command.” Having uttered these words, the Pandava returned with his brothers. Though he knew Shakuni’s resort to maya, Partha returned to gamble. Paining the hearts of their well-wishers, those maharathas, bulls among the Bharata lineage, again entered the sabha. They once again seated themselves, ready to gamble, ordained by destiny in the destruction of all the worlds.

‘Shakuni said, “O bull among the Bharata lineage! The old one returned all your riches and I worship him for that. But listen to me, because there is one more stake with great riches. If we are defeated by you in gambling, we will enter the great forest for twelve years. We will wear the skins of ruru deer and spend a thirteenth year in disguise, but in inhabited places. If recognized, we will return to the forest for another twelve years. But if you are defeated by us, together with Krishna, you will live in the forest for twelve years, clad in deerskin. When the thirteenth year is over, as is proper, each will obtain his own kingdom back. O Yudhishthira! O descendant of the Bharata lineage! With this stake, let us ready the dice and play another gamble with us.”

‘Those who were in the sabha said, “Alas! Why can’t his[13] relatives make him understand the great danger? The intelligent can understand this. But the bulls among the Bharatas do not understand it.”’

Vaishampayana said, ‘Partha, lord of men, heard the remarks of the people. But from shame and from his sense of dharma, again began to play with dice. The immensely intelligent one knew, but returned to the game, thinking about whether this would lead to the destruction of the Kurus. Yudhishthira said, “I am a king who always follows his own dharma. How can I not return when challenged? O Shakuni! I will play with you.” Shakuni replied, “O Pandavas! Ignore cattle, horses, many milch cows, innumerable sheep and goats, elephants, treasuries, gold and all the female and male slaves. There is a single stake of exile in the forest. Whether you or we lose, we will live in the forest. O bull among the Bharata lineage! This is the stake with which we will play. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! There is one throw of the dice for a life in the forest.” Partha accepted the challenge and Soubala gathered the dice. Shakuni told Yudhishthira, “I have won.”’

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Vaishampayana said, ‘Having been defeated, the sons of Pritha began to prepare for exile in the forest. One after another, they dressed themselves in deerskins and upper garments. Those destroyers of enemies had lost their kingdom and were attired in deerskin. On seeing them ready to leave for the forest, Duhshasana said, “The wheel has now begun to turn for the great-souled king, Dhritarashtra’s son. The Pandavas have been vanquished and have attained supreme misery. Today, the gods have come to us along their smooth celestial routes. We have become elders to our enemies in qualities, their elders and more numerous than they are. The Pandavas have descended into hell for a long time, for eternity. They have fallen from happiness and have lost their kingdom, destroyed for an eternity. The Pandavas were intoxicated with their strength and laughed at the sons of Dhritarashtra. They have been defeated and have lost their

riches. They must go to the forest. They have to give up their multicoloured armour and their divine and radiant garments. All of them must now put on the skins of ruru deer. They have accepted the stake that Soubala offered. Their minds were always nourished by the thought that there were no men like them in the world. But today, the Pandavas will know themselves in adversity, like sesame seeds that are barren. O Kourava![14] Your stay will not be like that of great-minded ones.[15] The deerskins of the powerful Pandavas have not been consecrated.[16] Yajnasena was the immensely intelligent descendant of Somaka. He gave his daughter Panchali to the Pandavas. That was not a deed well done, because the Parthas, husbands of Yajnaseni, are impotent. O Yajnaseni! What pleasure will you derive, since those dressed in fine garments are now reduced to deerskins in the forest, without riches and without homes? Choose a husband who will bring you pleasure. All the Kurus who are assembled here are forbearing and self-controlled and have no dearth of riches. Choose one of them as your husband, so that you do not suffer from this change in fortune. All the Pandavas are now like sesame seeds without kernels, or deer that only have skin on them. They are like barren corn. Why do you show homage to the Pandavas who have fallen? Serving sterile sesame seeds is a waste of labour." Dhritarashtra's son uttered these cruel and harsh words in the hearing of the Parthas.

'Having heard these words, the impetuous Bhimasena suppressed his anger. Like a Himalayan lion dashing at a jackal, he suddenly approached him[17] and loudly rebuked him. "O cruel and evil one! You utter words that lead to failure. You are boasting among these kings because of the skills of Gandhara.[18] Just as your words pierce our hearts like arrows, I will make you remember all this when I pierce your heart in battle. I will send to Yama's abode all those who are your followers and protectors because of desire and avarice, together with all their relatives." Clad in his deerskin, Bhima uttered these angry words. But though immersed in grief, he stuck to the path of dharma. The other one[19] had no shame. He danced around in

the middle of the Kurus and challenged him,[20] calling him a cow. Bhimasena said, "O Duhshasana! Cruel, harsh and rough words are possible for you. Who else will boast of riches obtained through deceit? If he does not rip apart your breast and drink your blood in battle, Partha Vrikodara will not go to the worlds attained by those with good deeds. In front of all the archers, I will kill the sons of Dhritarashtra in battle. I tell you truthfully that it is only after this that I will go to the abode of peace." When the Pandavas were leaving the sabha, the evil king Duryodhana, in play and delight, sought to mimic through his own steps Bhimasena's leonine gait. At that, Vrikodara half-turned his body towards him and said, "O stupid one! This will not make you successful. I will soon kill you, with your relatives, and give you my response by reminding you of this." The powerful and proud Bhima witnessed this insult to himself, but controlled his anger. Following the king[21] in the assembly of Kurus, he spoke these words and went out, "I will be the slayer of Duryodhana. Dhananjaya will be the slayer of Karna. Sahadeva will kill Shakuni, the deceitful one with the dice. In the midst of this sabha, I will once again utter the words of grave and solemn import. The gods will surely make this true when there is a war between us. I will kill Suyodhana[22] with a club in battle. I will press down his head on the ground with my foot. As for this evil-hearted and cruel Duhshasana, whose valour is in his words, I will drink his blood like the king of deer."[23]

'Arjuna said, "The truthful Bhima's resolutions are not known only in words. In the fourteenth year, what is going to occur will be witnessed. The earth will drink the blood of Duryodhana, Karna, the evil-hearted Shakuni and Duhshasana, as the fourth. O Bhimasena! On your instructions, I will kill in battle this jealous Karna, who uses his eloquence to praise the wicked." For giving pleasure to Bhima, this is what Arjuna swears. "In battle, I will kill Karna and Karna's followers with my arrows. With my sharp arrows, I will send to Yama's abode all those other kings who will fight with me out of their folly. Let the Himalayas move from where they are established, let the sun be dimmed, let coolness be

destroyed from the moon, if I deviate from this vow. In the fourteenth year, if Duryodhana does not restore the kingdom to us with proper honour, all this will certainly happen."'

Vaishampayana said, 'When Partha said this, Sahadeva, Madri's handsome and powerful son, grasped his own large arms. His eyes were red with anger and he sighed like a serpent. Desiring to kill Soubala, he uttered these words. "O foolish one! O destroyer of the fame of Gandhara! What you thought were dice are not dice, but sharp arrows that you have invited in battle. For you and your relatives, I will certainly accomplish what Bhima has said. I will do what I have to do and you can do everything that you wish to do. O Soubala! I will overpower you and swiftly kill you in battle with your relatives, if you stay and fight in accordance with the dharma of the kshatriyas." O lord of the world! On hearing Sahadeva's words, Nakula, the most handsome among men, uttered his words, "At this gambling match, Dhritarashtra's sons have used harsh and insulting words towards Yajnaseni, so as to bring pleasure to Duryodhana. These sons of Dhritarashtra are evil and summoned by destiny, are soon to die. In their great numbers, I will show them the abode of Vaivasvata.[24] On Dharmaraja's instructions and following Droupadi's footsteps, I will soon relieve the earth of the sons of Dhritarashtra." Having extended their arms to take these many oaths, all these tigers among men went to Dhritarashtra.'

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'Yudhishthira said, "I bid farewell to all the descendants of the Bharata lineage, my old grandfather,[25] King Somadatta and the great king Bahlika. And to Drona, Kripa, all the other kings, Ashvatthama, Vidura, Dhritarashtra and to all of Dhritarashtra's sons. And to Yuyutsu,[26] Sanjaya and all the others who are in this assembly. I am bidding farewell to all of you before I go. I will no doubt see you again on my return."'

Vaishampayana said, 'Out of shame, the righteous ones who were there could not say a word to Yudhishthira. But in their minds, they wished for

the welfare of the intelligent one.

'Vidura said, "Arya Pritha[27] is a princess. She should not go to the forest. She is delicate and old and has always been used to comfort. The illustrious one will remain in my house and be shown proper homage. O Parthas! Know this. And may you have welfare in every way. O Yudhishthira! O bull among the Bharata lineage! Know this to be my view that one who has been vanquished against dharma, never suffers from that defeat. You know dharma. Dhananjaya is knowledgeable in war. Bhimasena is the slayer of enemies. Nakula is one who collects wealth. Sahadeva is the one who administers. Dhoumya is supreme among those who know the brahman. Droupadi always follows the path of dharma and is skilled in the ways of dharma and artha. You love one another and always have kind words for each other. Because you are satisfied, you cannot be divided by enemies. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! This tranquillity brings welfare of every kind. No enemy can attack it, even if he is the equal of Shakra. In ancient times, when you lived in the Himalayas, Meru-Savarni[28] instructed you. So did Krishna Dvaipayana in the city of Varanavata, Rama[29] on the peak of Mount Bhrigu and Shambhu[30] by the Drishadvati.[31] Near Anjana, you have heard maharshi Asita. Dhoumya is your priest and there is Narada, who is always a witness. Do not give up the insight and intelligence that the rishis show homage to. O Pandava![32] With your intelligence you surpass Pururava, the son of Ila; with your strength you surpass the other kings; and in your service of dharma, you surpass the rishis. Set your minds on victory with Indra's resolution, Yama's control over anger, Kubera's charity and Varuna's self-control. In giving up one's self, you are like the moon. Obtain the sustenance of life from the water, forbearance from the earth, energy from the sun's disc and strength from the wind. Know that your own prosperity is due to the elements. May you be fortunate. May you be free from disease. I will see you return. O Yudhishthira! May you always act properly in all your deeds, in accordance with the principles of dharma and artha for times of calamity and distress. O Kounteya! O descendant of

the Bharata lineage! I give you leave to depart. May you find what is good for you. I will see you again when you return, successful and content."'

Vaishampayana said, 'Thus addressed, the Pandava, whose valour was his truth, replied, "Thus shall it be." Bowing to Bhishma and Drona, Yudhishthira went away.'

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Vaishampayana said, 'Then, when she was ready to depart, in extreme grief, Krishna went to the famous Pritha and took her leave from her and the other ladies who were there. She paid her respects and showed homage to each, as each deserved, and then got ready to go. At that, great lamentations were heard from the inner quarters of the Pandavas. Kunti was extremely miserable on seeing that Droupadi was about to leave. She uttered these words, in a voice that was choked with grief. "O child! Do not grieve because of this great calamity that has befallen you. You know very well the dharma for women and you also possess good character and conduct. O one with the sweet smiles! I need not instruct you about the duties towards your husbands. Two families[33] have been graced by your qualities and righteous conduct. The Kurus in the assembly hall are fortunate that they have not been burnt down by your rage. O unblemished one! Blessed by my thoughts about you, travel on a route that has no difficulties. The minds of good women are not distorted by what is inevitable. You are protected by the dharma of your superiors and you will swiftly obtain prosperity. When you live in the forest, always keep an eye on my son, Sahadeva, so that his mind does not sink under this great calamity that has come." The queen[34] replied, "So shall it be." She went out, her hair undone, in a single garment that was stained with blood and marked with her flowing tears.[35]

'As she wept and left, Pritha followed her, in grief. She saw all her sons, deprived of their ornaments and garments. Their bodies were covered in the skins of ruru deer and their faces were lowered in shame. They were surrounded by delighted enemies and mourning well-wishers. Driven by

affection, she approached all her sons in that state. In words of great lamentation, she spoke to them and their relatives. “You have always followed good dharma. You have always been adorned by fortitude in conduct. You have never been mean. You have always been firm and devoted. You have always been respectful of the gods. Why should this calamity befall you? Why should there be this reversal in fortune? I do not see whose envy and wickedness have led to this. Because I have given birth to you, all this may be because of my ill fortune. So despite possessing supreme qualities, you are suffering the oppression of limitless grief. You do not lack in valour, strength, courage, energy and fortitude. But thin of body, and deprived of your riches, how will you live in that desolate forest? If I had known that you were destined to live in the forest, after Pandu’s death, I would not have brought you down from the Shatashringa Mountains to Gajasahrya.[36] I think your father was fortunate. His mind was set on austerities and wisdom. His mind was set on going to heaven before he encountered misery because of his sons. I think that Madri, knowledgeable in dharma and virtuous in every way, was fortunate. She had the foresight of knowing what was going to happen and attained supreme salvation. Love and thoughts and purpose determined my decision. Alas on my love for life. I suffer all this misery because of that.” When Kunti lamented in this way, the Pandavas comforted her and showed her homage. Unhappily, they then set out for the forest. Vidura and the others, who were themselves aggrieved, consoled the afflicted Kunti. Explaining the reasons, and thus suffering even more, they slowly led her to Kshatta’s[37] house. King Dhritarashtra’s mind was immersed in grief. He asked Kshatta to come to him at once. So Vidura went to Dhritarashtra’s house. In great anxiety, Dhritarashtra, lord of men, questioned him.’

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‘Dhritarashtra asked, “How is Kounteya Dharmaraja Yudhishthira leaving? How about Bhimasena, Savyasachi and the two sons of Madri? O Kshatta!

How about Dhoumya and the ascetic Droupadi? I wish to hear everything. Describe to me every act of theirs."[38]

'Vidura replied, "Kunti's son Yudhishthira is departing, covering his face with his garment. Pandava Bhima is spreading his long arms, as he goes. Savyasachi is following the king,[39] scattering sand. Madri's son Sahadeva has smeared his face, as he goes. Nakula, the most handsome man in this world, follows the king. His mind is despondent and he has smeared his entire body with dust. The large-eyed and beautiful Krishna follows the king. She is weeping and has covered her face with her hair. O lord of the earth! Dhoumya is chanting terrible sama hymns connected with Yama and as he treads the path, he is holding kusa grass in his hand."

'Dhritarashtra asked, "The Pandavas are going in many different forms. O Vidura! Please tell me why they are going in these different ways."

'Vidura replied, "Though your sons robbed him of his kingdom and his riches through deceit, the mind of the intelligent Dharmaraja does not deviate from dharma. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! This king is always kind to the sons of Dhritarashtra. Though he has been deprived through deceit, he refuses to open his eyes in anger. 'I will burn these people down if I look at them through my terrible eyes.' Thinking this, the Pandava king goes with his face covered. Now listen to me, as I tell you why Bhima is going in this way. O bull among the Bharata lineage! 'There is no one equal to me in strength of arms.' Knowing this, Bhima spreads his long arms as he goes. Proud of the strength of his arms, he displays his arms. He wishes to perform acts on the enemy that do justice to those arms. Kunti's son Arjuna is capable of using both arms to shower arrows. Savyasachi follows the king, scattering sand. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Just as he scatters sand, in that fashion, he will release showers of arrows on his enemies. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! 'Let no one recognize my face today.' Thinking this, Sahadeva travels with a smeared face. 'Along the route, I may steal the hearts of women who look at me.' Thinking this, Nakula travels with his entire body covered in dust. Droupadi is attired in a single garment. She is weeping and she is in her

menses. Her hair has not been braided and her garment is smeared with blood. She has spoken these words. ‘In the fourteenth year, the wives of those who have caused my present plight, will find their husbands dead, their sons dead, their relatives dead and their beloved ones dead. Their bodies will be covered with the blood of their relatives. Their hair will not be braided and they will be in their menses. It is only after offering water to the dead that those aryas[40] will enter Gajasahrya. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Dhoumya is the self-controlled priest. He is chanting sama hymns connected with Yama and is leading them from the front, towards the south-west. He holds *darbha* grass.[41] ‘When the descendants of the Bharata lineage have been killed in battle, the elders of the Kuru clan will chant these sama hymns.’ Dhoumya is proceeding with these words. ‘Alas! Alas! Our lords are leaving. Witness this great misery.’ This is what the miserable citizens are saying in every direction. The intelligent Kounteyas are leaving for the forest in this fashion, indicating through these signs and marks the resolutions that exist in their hearts. As those foremost among men are leaving Gajasahrya, lightning is flashing in the cloudless sky and the earth is trembling. O lord of the earth! Rahu has swallowed the sun, though this is not the time of *parvani*.[42] Meteors are descending throughout the city. Predatory animals are screaming, together with vultures, jackals and crows, in the temples of the gods, in sanctuaries and from the tops of walls and houses. O king! These are the great and terrible portents as the Pandavas leave for the forest. They indicate the doom of the Bharatas, since you have acted in accordance with evil counsel.”’

Vaishampayana said, ‘Narada now appeared in the sabha and stood before the Kurus. He was surrounded by maharshis and spoke these terrible words, “In the fourteenth year from now, because of Duryodhana’s crime and through the strength of Bhima and Arjuna, the Kouravas who are here will be destroyed.” Having uttered these words, the supreme of devarshis, graced with the great prosperity of the brahman, arose to the sky and swiftly disappeared.

‘At this, Duryodhana, Karna and Soubala Shakuni thought that Drona would be their refuge and offered him the kingdom.[43] Drona spoke these words to the evil Duryodhana, Duhshasana, Karna and all the other Bharatas. “The brahmanas have said that the Pandavas, sons of the gods, should not be killed.[44] But with all my strength, I will do whatever I can for those who seek refuge with me. With all their hearts and devotion, the sons of Dhritarashtra and their king have come to me and I cannot abandon them. Destiny is always supreme. In accordance with dharma, the sons of Pandu have been defeated and have left for the forest. The Kouravas will live in the forest for twelve years. They will practise brahmacharya. But since they will fall prey to anger and intolerance, the Pandavas will return with enmity and be the cause of great grief to me. In a feud over friendship, I once dislodged Drupada from his kingdom. O descendant of the Bharata lineage![45] In his anger, he performed a sacrifice to obtain a son who would kill me. Through the austerities of Yaja and Upayaja,[46] he obtained a son named Dhrishtadyumna from the fire and the slender-waisted Droupadi from the middle of the altar. He[47] was given by the gods and has radiance like that of the fire. He was born with bow, arrows and armour. Since I am subject to the dharma of earth, I am possessed by great fear for him. This son of Prishata,[48] a bull among men, is now on their side. There will be great fear to my life if I ever have to battle him. He is famous in the world because it has been heard that he will kill me. Because of your deed, that time of destruction has arrived. Therefore, without any loss of time, do what is best for you. This happiness will last for a short time, like the shade of a palm tree in the winter. Perform great sacrifices, enjoy your pleasures and donate. In the fourteenth year, a great calamity will befall you. O Duryodhana! Depending on your inclinations, you have heard or understood. If you so desire, use pacification with the Pandavas.” On hearing Drona’s words, Dhritarashtra said, “O Kshatta![49] What the preceptor[50] has said is true. Go back to the Pandavas. If they do

not return, offer respect to the Pandavas. Let these fortunate sons go with arms, chariots and infantry."'[51]

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Vaishampayana said, 'O great king! When the Parthas were defeated in gambling with the dice and had left for the forest, Dhritarashtra began to worry a lot. Dhritarashtra, lord of the people, was seated, worrying, sighing and with his mind distracted. At that time, Sanjaya[52] told him, "O lord of the earth! You have obtained the entire earth, with all its riches. O king! The Pandavas have left from the kingdom. Why are you grieving?" Dhritarashtra replied, "The maharatha Pandavas are terrible in battle and have allies. Knowing that the enmity will occur, should one not sorrow?" Sanjaya said, "O king! This great enmity is the consequence of your great deed. There will be complete destruction of the entire world and all the relatives. Though restrained by Bhishma, Drona and Vidura, your shameless and evil-minded son Duryodhana sent the Pratikamin, the son of a suta, to bring the Pandavas' beloved wife Droupadi, the follower of dharma."

'Dhritarashtra replied, "When the gods wish to defeat a man, they first take his intelligence away, so that his vision becomes distorted. When destruction is nigh and intelligence is clouded, an improper course of action appears as the proper course of action and sticks to the heart. That which is evil appears in the form of that which is good and that which is good appears in the form of that which is evil. When destruction is near, they appear thus and one is content. Destiny does not arrive with a club and strike one on the head with it. The strength of time is that it makes the opposite seem to be right. By dragging the ascetic Panchali into the middle of the sabha, those evil ones have caused this terrible calamity that makes the hair on the body stand up. She is beautiful and she is not born from a womb.[53] She has been born from the fire. She is illustrious and is knowledgeable in all dharma. Who but a deceitful gambler[54] could overpower her and drag her into the middle of an assembly hall?

Following the dharma of women,[55] the one with the beautiful hips was covered in blood. Panchali was in single garment. She looked at the Pandavas, robbed of their riches, deprived of their thoughts, robbed of their wife, robbed of their prosperity, deprived of all their pleasures and reduced to a state of servitude. Bound by the noose of dharma, they were unable to exhibit their valour. Among all the assembled Kurus, Duryodhana and Karna spoke harsh and insulting words to the angry, defiant and miserable Krishna. O Sanjaya! The earth itself would be burnt down because of those wretched eyes. Would anything have been left of my sons? On seeing Krishna being dragged into the sabha, all the women of the Bharata lineage, who had assembled with Gandhari, loudly cried out in anguish. No agnihotras were offered in the evening, because the brahmanas were enraged at Droupadi's oppression. Terrible winds began to blow, as if the destruction of the beings had arrived. Terrible meteors descended from the sky and Rahu swallowed the sun. This was not the time of parvani. But a terrible fear was created in the minds of the subjects. Fearful fires blazed from the places where chariots are kept. All the flagstaffs crumbled, signifying disaster for the Bharatas. In Duryodhana's agnihotra, jackals howled in terrible tones. From all the directions, donkeys brayed back in response. O Sanjaya! Bhishma then left with Drona and so did Kripa, Somadatta and the maharatha Bahlika. At that time, prompted by Vidura, I told Krishna that I would grant her whatever boon she desired. Panchali then chose the Pandavas, whose energy is unlimited. I then allowed them to leave, with their chariots and their bows. It is then that the immensely wise Vidura, who knows all the dharma, spoke, 'O descendants of the Bharata lineage! This dragging of Krishna into the assembly hall will bring about your destruction. The daughter of the king of Panchala is the supreme Shri. It was decreed by destiny that Panchali would marry the Pandavas. The angry Parthas will never pardon her humiliation. Nor will the mighty archers, the Vrishnis, or the immensely energetic Panchalas. They are protected by Vasudeva, always fixed on the truth. Surrounded by the Panchalas, Bibhatsu will return. Among them, there will be the immensely strong and mighty

archer Bhimasena. He will come whirling his club, like the staff of death. No kings will be able to withstand the sound of the intelligent Partha's Gandiva, or the speed of Bhima's club. Therefore, it seems to me that one should always have peace, and not war, with the Parthas. I have always thought that the Pandavas are stronger than the Kurus. With the force of his arms, Bhima killed in battle the immensely radiant and powerful King Jarasandha. O bull among the Bharata lineage! You must ensure peace with the Pandavas. Without any hesitation, act impartially vis-à-vis the two parties.' O son of Gavalgana![56] Thus did Kshatta utter words that were steeped in dharma and artha. But out of the affection I bear for my son, I did not accept these words."'

Aranyaka Parva

The word aranya *means forest and in the eighteen-parva classification of the Mahabharata, Aranyaka Parva comes third. This parva is about the Pandavas' sojourn in the forest. The word vana also means forest and this parva is also sometimes called Vana Parva. Aranyaka Parva has 299 chapters and is the second longest parva after Shanti Parva. In the 100-parva classification of the Mahabharata, Sections 29 through 44 constitute Aranyaka Parva. Following the practice we have followed, there are two numbers we have used when we give numbers to the chapters. The first number is a consecutive one, from the beginning, and the second number (within brackets) is the numbering within Aranyaka Parva.*